INSTRAW news

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

The United Nations and Women

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The United Nations and Women

EDITORIAL

If the International Women's Year (IWY) Conference in Mexico City in 1975 marked a turning point for women, it also marked a turning point for the United Nations and its whole "family" of independent and semi-independent institutions and agencies. Within a year, virtually all had adopted and pledged to fulfill a mandate to "increase women's participation" primarily in development (Women in Development or WID) but also in almost every other area in which the UN operates. It is a phrase readers will find repeated over and over again.

1992, almost 20 years after Mexico City and ten years since INSTRAW began operations, seems an appropriate time to take stock of what impact, if any, the IWY Conference and the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS) seven years later actually had on women. An interview with Minerva Bernardino, one of four women who signed the UN Charter in San Francisco is included (on page 15) as part of the stock-taking process. The rest of this issue of ***INSTRAW News*** *looks at the work of the United Nations for women, gives an overview of some of what has been accomplished--and what hasn't -- and a look ahead at major issues and plans for the Women's Conference in 1995 in Beijing.*

At the same time, at the request of many women's organizations and individuals who do not have regular contact with the UN system, the articles which follow are also intended to serve as a guide to its various parts and what each is doing or trying to do on a wide range of women's issues.

The result of the excercise is far from comprehensive, but the process itself has been revealing. It has been almost ten months since a letter was sent to almost every institution in the system asking for an article or summary of their women's programmes. Some never responded at all. A few replies were rapid, blunt -- and disheartening: "There is no provision in our mandate to establish activities, projects or programmes specifically geared to women," or words to that effect. Others, clearly too busy to respond or too embarrassed not to, sent a melange of listings and official documents from which INSTRAW was able to cull a general sense of their activities. Of these, most could best be categorized as cosmetic, carried out by an overworked women's

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EDITORIAL

"focal points" with mandates based on resolutions and "Action Plans" paying lip service and little else to women's concerns.

On the other hand, many contributions were timely and thoughtful; one agency even sent two versions, one long and one short, to accommodate any space requirements. And there were many harried women who gave their own very limited time to meet with the INSTRAW editors, to answer endless questions, and, in the end, to give us the incentive not to give up, but to set it all down as models for others to follow. Their commitment should provide a needed impetus for a new look and a fresh start.

The various articles speak for themselves. Three were written by the Directors of those UN bodies with specific competence in women's issues, INSTRAW itself, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Together with the descriptions of activities in the rest of the UN system, they paint a very mixed picture of strengths and weaknesses. As Minerva Bernardino says in her interview, "the United Nations is a mirror," --and we can all see where some of the cracks are.

Implicit or explicit in virtually all of the articles which follow are some fundamental but as yet unanwered questions: How can the UNstrengthen its commitment to women for "Equality, Peace and Development?" Are the women's focal points being fully or even adequately utilized? How can they be made more effective? Through more resources? Through less segregation? Should there continue to be targets --or quotas, some would say -- for recruitment of women into the system? Do they enforce achievement or create antagonism? And, finally, most basic of all, should there continue to be special women's programmes or should mainstreaming be the priority?

As the issue of ***INSTRAW News*** *makes clear, there is no one answer and no consensus on any of these issues. There is a widespread recognition, however, that these questions must continue to be addressed, that the evaluation process is open-ended, and will continue to be as new issues and new problems are identified, bringing with them the need to develop still more new policies and procedures.*

The Beijing Conference in 1995 -- and the 50th anniversary of the United Nations that same year -- will represent key steps in this process. We have tried to help clarify at least some of the questions that will be addressed ■

About *INSTRAW*

by Margaret Shields,
Director

United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) is one of the smaller institutions of the United Nations but it is, in our view, an extremely important one. INSTRAW was formed as a direct result of the 1975 UN International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City and was formally established the following year. Although an integral part of the UN system, it is fully autonomous, funded exclusively by voluntary contributions from both governments and private sources.

Our Role: Research and Training

The question most people ask is "what exactly does INSTRAW do?" They know it has something to do with women, but often do not know how it differs from the UN Development Programme for Women (UNIFEM), or from the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). UNIFEM is what we call an operational agency, providing direct and practical assistance and training to women in the developing countries. DAW has a coordinating role, especially in relation to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

INSTRAW is rather like the research and development section of a large corporation. Our job is to do research that will make the work of our corporation, the United Nations and its member countries, more efficient and effective. Our particular mandate is to carry out research and to develop training materials that will assist in the inclusion of women in the development process--especially in the developing countries.

Together we work toward the advancement of women along with the other agencies of the UN and women's NGOs worldwide.

The participants at the Mexico City Conference recognized that it was not enough to simply have good intentions. Policies aimed at improving the situation of women needed to be evaluated and monitored to ensure that the good intentions were translated into reality. As its name suggests, INSTRAW's twin priorities are research and training, complemented and supported by a variety of information activities.

The research component is designed to make women "visible", describing and defining the activities and situation of women much more precisely and comprehensively. The training part is primarily to develop effective methodologies to include women in the development process.

Making Women Visible

This task divides neatly in two. The first part is the continuing collaboration with a number of other UN agencies to help governments improve the collection of statistics, to refine concepts and develop methodologies for collecting new data and for compiling statistics using both new and existing data. But INSTRAW does not confine itself to data on women; in order to understand the situation of women it is also essential to understand how it relates to the condition of men in the same society.

Unfortunately, in most developing countries, data, particularly on the activities of women, are often lacking. Women are, in many respects invisible. Therefore, high on INSTRAW's agenda is a continuing programme of improving data collection in cooperation with governments in developing regions. This includes the development of new data bases that will also help governments and aid agencies focus more sharply on new and emerging problems.

One of our current programmes focuses on statistics on elderly women. Developing countries are now going through the same "ageing" process as the industrialized countries, but there are significant differences. In most developing countries there is little in the way of developed social security systems. Few people have the capacity to save and the increasing number of people surviving into old age is likely to place an increasing burden on smaller families and less than adequate health services. It is important now, while there is still time, to assist countries to develop the data that will enable them to reach policy decisions appropriate to their own cultural and social conditions.

The second part of making women visible is developing methodologies for the collection of new types of data. INSTRAW is currently involved in a major study that will bring together the work that has been done internationally using time-use survey techniques to measure the value of both unpaid and paid work. These account for a very large proportion of the work being done, particularly in the less developed countries. There is also an increasing concern with the development of measuring the extent, and in some cases the value, of household activity and voluntary work in the community.

Current systems of national accounting leave out as much as they include. For example if, as is suggested, more than half the agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa takes place in the informal sector, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures for those countries are nonsensical. Similarly, if I go down the road to the local factory and make ten shirts there is a rise in the GDP but if I stay home and make the same garments the GDP does not even quiver. The reality of the system of national accounts is that it undercounts economic activity in general and the contribution of women in particular.

We have done some considerable work in this area, including case studies in four different African countries where we tried to obtain better informal sector statistics from existing data. The aim now is to develop other, more accurate measures of total

productive activity and to improve our understanding of the relationship between paid and unpaid work. It will, as always, be carried out in collaboration with other relevant UN organizations, in this case, the UN Statistical Division and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The UN Statistical Division has a clear interest in continuing improvements in the System of National Accounts (SNA) while ILO has a primary interest in employment categories and the maintenance and protection of workers – and workers in the informal sector are among the least well protected, along with housewives. Neither group enjoys protection in the form of sick leave, annual holidays or health care, let alone retirement benefits.

INSTRAW's own interest is in increasing recognition of the value of women's work. We are opposed to labeling women as victims. Rather we are working to empower women to make choices that fit with their lives and enable them to contribute fully to their own and their community's benefit.

Water is vital for life, Nepal
UN Photo
J.K. Isaac

Training for Participation

Over the years INSTRAW has built up a wide range of programmes in its second major activity area, training, and specifically training for the inclusion of women in development. Numerous seminars and workshops have focused on "training

Home economics students receive training, Costa Rica
UN/Photo
M. Grant.

the trainers", development officials, UN field staff, NGOs and women's organizations at the national, regional, and international levels. Among the subjects covered have been development planning, women in development and statistics and indicators.

A major breakthrough was the development of multi-media modular training packages produced in collaboration with the ILO-Turin Centre. The packages, on women and development; women, water supply and sanitation; and women and new and renewable sources of energy are considered models in their field. The components range from traditional instructional manuals to audio-visual materials. They are intended to be adapted to national and community use, with all or just parts of the packages easily and inexpensively duplicated as desired.

The emphasis is on participation rather than traditional structured teaching. Participants are asked to address real problems in real situations in which they develop their own solutions. The seminar or workshop leaders remain on the sidelines as facilitators. In the end, the men who participate learn to understand the problems women face while the women learn to relate these problems to the overall development process.

By the end of 1991, INSTRAW was able to report a 100 per cent increase in the number of participants-- about 2,000 people-- in training workshops and seminars over the past decade. If they, in turn, share what they have learned to only 10 other people each, the multiplier effect would be considerable. According to reports, this is beginning to happen.

Information Sharing

INSTRAW has a documentation centre with a collection of UN documents on women and development issues, newsletters published by women's organizations and other research studies, reports and books on women and development and gender issues. Materials are organized according to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library system. A computerized bibliographic data base of holdings is being built and currently contains more than 2000 entries. Additional computerized rosters of organizations and experts in gender issues are maintained.

In addition to publishing *INSTRAW News* twice a year in English, French and Spanish, INSTRAW uses its in-house publishing capabilities to produce a large number of reports, documents and public information material.

Current Special Areas of Interest

INSTRAW's concern with the inclusion of women in development has led us into several new areas of interest within our current programme.

The first of these is a project being developed for training trainers of women farmers in transition countries, specifically Bulgaria and Hungary, for the new conditions they are facing in producing and marketing for an open economy. This project is being developed in conjunction with several groups in three states of the United States and will involve training as well as planned visits and farms stays by the women trainers from Eastern Europe and the United States women farmers. By this method it is hoped to test out the effectiveness of this hands-on experience combined with more formal learning.

Our interest in Gender Training has lead to our inclusion in a joint UNDP, UNRISD, INSTRAW project aimed at identifying successful strategies for the inclusion of gender concerns in mainline government ministries. This project will be designed as a series of case studies in selected developing countries that have already developed their own policies for including women and women's concerns in mainline departments. The aim is to precisely identify the factors and mechanisms that are most effective in achieving progress in this area.

Another area of special interest is gender, environment and sustainable development. INSTRAW's work on this topic includes a state-of-the art report bringing together all the major theoretical perspectives on women and the environment. This study is presently being co-published by Zed Books and INSTRAW. A series of case studies have been commissioned focusing on different environmental problems affecting women in five different countries in the developing world and the way women, governments and other sectors responde to them. In collaboration with WHO, INSTRAW will focus more closely on women and environmental health issues.

From time to time INSTRAW carries out special projects that have been proposed or sponsored by other groups but which fit in with the general thrust of our mandate. One example of this is our women and communications project that is now in its final stages. This project is sponsored by the Italian government and is being carried out in three Latin American countries. It is concerned with an assessment of all facets of the communication sector from a gender perspective and the subsequent development of strategies to improve the visibility and participation of women in the media.

Looking Ahead

INSTRAW, like women's organizations the world over, sees its existence as part of a temporary but vital phase of world development. INSTRAW's ultimate ambition is to see a world in which our grandchildren will look back and see our struggles today as almost anachronistic -- in which the Secretary General will call a special meeting of the UN staff to announce her recommendations to abolish INSTRAW, UNIFEM and the Commission on the Status of Women because there is a gender balance at all levels in all UN agencies, because 50% of the world's politicians are women, because girl children are receiving the same opportunities as boys, because the dreams of those who signed the UN Declaration in San Francisco in 1945 have all come true.■

Division for the Advancement of Women

by Chafika Meslem,
Director

Shortly after the Nairobi Conference, two issues (Nos. 2 and 3) of *Women 2000*, published at the beginning of 1986 by the Branch for the Advancement of Women, described the work carried out for the advancement of women by the organizations of the United Nations system, several specialized agencies and a large number or secretariat components. For Example, issue No. 2 of *Women 2000* carried an article on INSTRAW's activities, while in issue No. 3 there was a piece on the Branch for the Advancement of Women. The *INSTRAW News* has made this space available to us for a review of the principal results achieved over the last 10 years with regard to the advancement of women.

Developing Priorities

Immediately following the Economic and Social Council's adoption of the recommendations of the special session on the status of women (January 1987), the Division for the Advancement of Women set to work systematically developing priority themes on a very broad range of issues connected with the objectives of equality, development and peace to be examined by expert groups and in seminars. Participants were drawn from national bodies, research institutes and universities seeking to promote women's interests and worked at the grass-roots level. They were confronted with the daily lot of women who live and experience discrimination as part of their family or professional life or simply, in many societies, as second-class citizens--with no regard for either the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which was accepted by all Member States of the United Nations (179 countries as of this writing) or the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981), binding the 117 countries which had ratified or acceded to it as of 1 September 1992.

Studies were prepared within the Division, along with national case studies presented by individual participants, dealing with specific and practical issues such as: national machinery for the advancement of women; equality in economic, political and social participation and in the decision-making process; the problems of rural women, of single women as the head of households, of

women refugees and displaced women, of disabled women and of elderly women; the question of development and its real impact on women; the debt burden facing most of the developing countries and its adverse effects on policies for the advancement of women; the political and economic reforms in the former socialist countries and their implications for women; violence against women and finally poverty, which affects more women than men throughout the world.

The studies carefully analyzed each of the problems and led to the formulation of action-oriented proposals that were submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women for examination and adoption. This new approach helped government authorities abandon stereotyped thinking and encouraged government representatives to concern themselves with the problems facing women in their daily lives.

Recommendations for Action

The space available to us in these columns will not permit a detailed discussion of all the recommendations that have originated from these expert group meetings and seminars, but there are a few that could have an extraordinary impact on the status of women that I should like to mention. I am referring to the recommendations of the group of experts on violence, organized in November 1991 which recommended, among other proposals, the adoption of a draft declaration on violence against women as an international instrument, introducing new legislation to prevent and punish violence. Secondly, the recommendations that called for stronger national mechanisms in the form of national agencies with sufficient funding and human resources to be able to carry out their true mandate within the government and at the national level. Lastly, but not least, the goal of placing women in 30 percent of all political, economic and social decision-making positions. With the exception of the Nordic countries and the representation of women in their parliaments, the Member States of the United Nations are still far from achieving this target and are reluctant to introduce the measures of positive discrimination needed to offset the effects of centuries of inequality, of which women continue to be the victims.

Review and Appraisal

Pressure on national authorities for the introduction of special measures is all the more necessary in light of the fact that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, which had been adopted by consensus in July 1985 and call for the eradication of discrimination against women by the year 2000, were quickly forgotten by the countries that had adopted them at Nairobi. In the case of certain countries, the Nairobi objectives were lost sight of amidst the many economic difficulties of the 1980's but cannot be wholly attributed to this alone. The fact is that the record of achievement of some countries who were spared severe economic problems is no more distinguished.

Actually, it needs to be stated that the advancement of women is in fact not a genuine priority in all countries, and that it is only in those nations where women represent an influential pressure group, because of their vote, that real progress has been made in terms of equality of employment opportunity and the introduction of concrete measures that translate into legal instruments–enacting non-discriminatory laws–which still remain ineffectual unless there is a genuine

political will to put them into practice.

Following the mini-exercise involving the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in 1990, the Economic and Social Council, acting on the Commission's recommendation, reasserted this established fact of limited real progress and, in the introduction to the twenty-three recommendations adopted, made the following statement: "The entrenched resistance to women's advancement and the reduction of resources available for change that has accompanied the world economic situation in the late 1980's have meant that there has been a loss of impetus and even stagnation in some areas where more progress would have been expected".

This declaration, among others, gives substance to the legitimacy of the demands for the comprehensive advancement of women at all levels. Equality will only become a reality when there is a joining of efforts at the national, regional and international levels to eradicate the discrimination to which women are subject in all areas. This kind of mobilization at the international level should take the form of increased flows of resources. However, the funds available to the Division for the advancement of Women, for example, mirror the financial difficulties facing the national agencies in the different countries and reflect the gap between the very favourable statements with regard to women's demands heard at the official level and the resources available to satisfy those demands. The Nairobi Strategies all remain valid but must be given effect through policies followed up by real measures to root out the overt, hidden or insidious discrimination that persists in all societies.

DAW and the Beijing Conference

The preparations for the 1995 conference on women have gotten off to a good start. DAW as the Secretariat for the conference must, first of all, ensure genuine coordination and collaboration within the entire United Nations system in order that every department and every organization participates, within its area of activity, in the preparation of this event. The Division must also be sensitive to the particular concerns of Member States when drafting the various background documents. To be sure, consensus and even unanimity exists within the international community as to the need for the advancement of women to become an unchallenged reality at all levels of society; however, because of specific cultural and historic features of different countries and, obviously their varying financial capabilities, the views held as to the best way of achieving this objective may not be entirely identical.

Two decades after Mexico City, the problems of women remain essentially the same but are set in a new context, a context that has been fundamentally altered by radical change and in which the values and standards of different societies have been called into question and, in some cases, completely swept away. The need, therefore, is to see to it that in the emerging world order, in the current desire to build authentic democracy, women are participants and agents to the same degree as men in the creation of the better future to which we all aspire.

The aim is to ensure that men and women work together, on a basis of equality, for genuine democracy in which social justice and peace become the ultimate objective of all those in government. This may seem an Utopia, but for my part I invoke my femininity as the basis of my belief in a better world built with the help of women. ■

UNIFEM: the Women's Partnership

by Sharon Capeling-Alakija,
Director

UNIFEM, the UN Development Fund for Women, has its roots in the international women's movement. It was founded in 1976, based on a belief in women's capacity for leadership, for taking control of their own lives, and for the positive and creative influence they can exert on their families, their communities and their nations as well. Since it began, UNIFEM has worked tirelessly with the poorer women in the developing world to help them make improvements in their lives; by funding some 800 projects throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, we help women gain access to the skills and resources they need to decrease their daily domestic drudgery and actively participate in policy and decision-making. Our ultimate responsibility is to help bring down the walls of prejudice and indifference to what women can and should be able to accomplish.

Problems and Potential

Despite the achievements of the UN Decade for Women, despite the fact that gender is "on the agenda" of most development agencies, despite the women's machineries and Women in Development (WID) units established in virtually every government and international agency, despite higher resources allocated to women's programming and the myriad of projects that have flourished, despite all these successes, the fact remains that two thirds of the world's women remain poor, and their numbers are growing. The challenge of the nineties is therefore not only to articulate a vision, but to achieve results!

One of my greatest frustrations is that as we move into the last decade of the 20th century there has been very little movement in the major institutions that govern the geo-political and economic life on the planet. We still have to get back to basics. In places like the World Bank and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), women are chronically and consistently absent, or else they are marginalized in departments or bureaux which are under-resourced and certainly not priorities.

To me, this was crystallized at the Earth Summit. Women had been vital in getting the environment on the global agenda: women scientists, women activists,

women campaigners for change -- licking envelopes and stamps, picketing, raising awareness -- all as part of an enormous effort by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Governments finally got on board only when the polls showed the environment was an issue of concern. Yet when it came to the landmark conference in Rio, out of over four hundred speakers, only 15 were women.

On the other hand, there really has been a sea change. I am delighted and excited to be head of UNIFEM at this particular juncture; we have reached a critical mass. During my tenure I see an opportunity to make a real difference; since the Nairobi Women's Conference, many of the intellectual leaders, the writers and activists in the women's movement now come from the developing countries and are giving it more credibility. With the Cold War behind us, the real issues are between rich and poor, both between North and South and within countries, and it is the women who will be able to bridge that gap. It is part of their traditional upbringing: even as little girls, they are asked to cope, to manage whatever resources are available. As the Secretary-General himself pointed out at Rio, the words economy and ecology come from the same Greek root meaning good management of the home. By extending the idea of the home beyond the white picket fence or the adobe hut to see the Earth as our "common home", is it not logical to perceive women as the real managers of this home? This is the imperative that will call on women to use all their traditional skills. It will remain an important underlying theme in all present and future UNIFEM projects.

As part of the UN system, UNIFEM may be very small in the overall scheme of things, but it will have an important role to play. UNIFEM can help create access for women to the system, to create space for women from both inside and on the outside. And, because we are a funding and supporting agency, we can enable women to develop the skills and the confidence to negotiate a better deal for themselves.

An Overview of Operations

We concentrate on practical, income-generating projects which are based on market demand. UNIFEM has already begun to make significant improvements in women's acess to credit and technologies to reduce their workloads. As we continue to build in this area, we are now focusing on three other priority areas: agriculture, trade and industry and, what is really a combination and culmination of all our efforts, the development of appropriate mainstream macro-policy.

In the agriculture sector, for example, a project to work directly with women farmers to help them produce more maize more efficiently could be completely negated by pricing policies that undercut its value in the marketplace. Financial and technical assistance alone is not enough. There must be cooperation with local and national planners and policy makers to allow such programmes to be successful. And the women themselves must understand not only the policies but how they are formulated, and to become more active in that process.

In the area of trade, women don't even have the necessary language to confront the issues. When comparing the volume of trade, which accounts for the bulk of global finance, with external financial assistance, it becomes evident that women must become more involved in this sector. Bangladesh, for example, is the single largest recipient of development assistance; if changes were made in the International Fibre Agreement through GATT, the re-

Coconut grove, India
UN/Photo
J. K. Isaac.

Small industry, handicraft, Jamaica
UNDP/Photo
M. Ramzan

sources going to that country would more than equal the sum of all its external assistance.

Ultimately, our strategy, for achieving these changes is to help women learn skills in alliance-building, how to work with NGOs, universities and officials at all levels so that they can prove themselves to planners and policy-makers. As vociferous active and effective groups *outside* the governments they will be recognized as being valuable *inside* it. In the end, UNIFEM and other donors from the outside will only have a marginal role in bringing about fundamental change. Change comes from within a country and at best we can only hope to create an enabling environment. To do so, we have to work on two levels, on small women's projects as well as in the mainstream.

One case in point is in assistance to countries trying to provide basic necessities for increasing numbers of refugees

from natural disasters and civil wars. The situation is acute, and although statistics are spotty, it is estimated that the majority of refugees are women and children. In many of the camps, women are sewing and crocheting to generate income, for which there is no real market. The work therefore does little to improve the quality of life in the camps, but does cut into the time women need for coping with the daily chores of survival. This is where a WID specialist is needed: as a condition of UNIFEM's support in one such camp in Ghana, women were placed in policy-making positions within the camp and were taught new skills in agriculture, masonry and carpentry. They were not only able to build better shelters but also used vacant fields surrounding the camp to grow crops for market. More direct, active participation had helped improve the standard of living of everyone.

Women cope with new technologies. Venezuela
UNIDO/2222/2A.

Some Thoughts for the Future

Looking ahead to Beijing in 1995, I anticipate an agenda focused on action. UNIFEM's priority will continue to be women's equal participation in global governance. But there could be trouble ahead. Consider a scenario where women are off in China discussing the obstacles they face while men are in New York designing the institutions that could, in all likelihood, once again deal women out of macro-policy well into the next millennium. The international community has to ensure that in the preparations for 1995 we are developing strategies that will enable women to have a central role in these discussions.

Currently, with increasing intensity, women are beginning to position themselves to be partners in the political process. In the developing world, they seek increased opportunities for fair access to the technology, training and credit they need for their enterprises. They want to participate equally in the design and implementation of policies that guide national development planning. UNIFEM will continue to support the empowerment of women by giving them a voice, an opportunity to continue innovating, creating and adjusting constantly in their struggle to give new meaning to their life.

Women can no longer accept the arbitrary division that confines them to dealing only with so-called "women's issues." All issues are women's issues. By giving them a voice, we are helping women play a positive role in the rebuilding of the world that we have only borrowed from our children. ■

An Interview with *Minerva Bernardino*

Sixty-three years after beginning her personal fight against discrimination against women, Minerva Bernardino, one of only four women who signed the San Francisco Charter, still has a desk cluttered with papers from innumerable projects, documents and petitions. Her strong, decisive voice is a reflection of her character and principles which leave no room for doubts. She is convinced that her firm beliefs have kept her from growing old: "a soul that is young and busy cannot rest." Even more sure of herself than when she started, Bernardino has not laid down her weapons. "Women's battles have not ended," she says, but she regrets "the passing of the golden days. After only a few of our goals were attained, women became too comfortable and much less committed."

After so many years and so much effort trying to have women's rights truly recognized, "not just granted," Ms. Bernardino is disillusioned. "The United Nations has not fulfilled my expectations. Article 8 of the Charter* is simply not being complied with. And I think that today's woman has lost interest in seeing that it is." The feminist struggle has lost its momentum, she believes. "When one generation forges new paths, the next is less aggressive because it already has rights it never had to fight for."

Born in El Seibo, Dominican Republic in 1907, Ms. Bernardino held a series of government and diplomatic posts beginning in 1926. She was a delegate to the UN Conference in San Francisco in 1945, and continued to represent her country in the UN until 1957. Her positions included Chair of the Commission of the Status of Women and First Vice President of the Economic and Social Council

"Recognize, don't grant" should be women's demand. "Unfortunately, many activists today formulate their views from a mistaken perspective and are very often discriminatory themselves when seeking special considerations or exceptions. Women must have the same, not different treatment as men."

The Great Disappointment

In her more than 17 years at the United Nations, there have been many battles, as she considers them, some won, some lost.

Article 8 of the United Nations Charter, says Ms. Bernardino, "states everything that the feminist struggle must achieve. If it were complied with fully, in all its depth and meaning, the fight for women's recognition simply would not be necessary. The situation is also somewhat distorted because women have not been able to separate clearly their basic, natural rights, which are part of their condition as human beings, from their political rights. Women have no real experience in the political arena because up to very late in this century, women were not allowed to participate in political activities. What happened as a result? Women entered politics through political parties, which

*Article 8 reads: "The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs."

are in turn dominated by men. Naturally, men don't want women taking their place, and because of their political experience, they know how to manipulate party policies any way they want. Women must not permit this to continue. They must carry on the fight for their rights outside the political establishment. The established political path is wrong but it is the one that activists have chosen. It is a very expensive mistake. It has not necessarily always meant a setback, but is has brought stagnation."

Bernardino lived in a "glorious time at the United Nations," as she describes it. "There was women's leadership which is lacking now. I don't see any active leader to carry on the fight. This makes me ask myself if it has all been worthwhile if the women for whom one has fought do not value the goals achieved, or are no longer interested in them."

An Unfinished Revolution

She believes that the women who in her time fought for the same cause were "conscious that they were making a revolution. We watched every single detail, even if it only referred to protocol. For example, I am very proud to have been instrumental in changing the name of the Declaration of the 'Rights of Man' to the Declaration of Human Rights. The word *man* represents gender, not species; it therefore excluded women.

There are other examples: she would return an invitation if it came addressed to her husband and "Mrs., because I was the Ambassador, *he* was the escort." That revolution of the '50s had to do with other, more important language issues as well, such as the right to live with dignity. "In interpreting these words, we denounced, in the United Nations, the horrible mutilations of women in certain religious/cultural rituals in certain regions in Africa. We started a job that has not yet ended. Women have not really worked in solidarity to end it."

She frequently uses the word *solidarity* in her conversation, "because it is the key to success. Just causes in general always win, I am convinced, but without solidarity you do not achieve your specific goals."

Thirty-Five Years Later

Although it is unquestionable that there have been tangible gains and achievements with respect to women's rights, Ms. Bernardino believes that many of the goals for which we are fighting today are the same as those talked about 35 years ago. For

UN/McLain

Minerva Bernardino, Dominican Republic.

example, at the 10th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in 1956, Ms. Bernardino, representing the Dominican Republic, was already advocating for "women's participation in the work of the United Nations and its specialized agencies." Today, in 1992, this has still not been achieved, inside or outside the United Nations system, and won't be until women are chosen on their merits, without discrimination and without any special considerations. A few days ago, a distinguished Latin-American woman was telling me how happy she was because in her country legislation was being drawn up to grant women 30% of all official posts. "That is a mistake" I said to her. It is a form of discrimination because women are being given a quota. Is there a quota for men?"

The trap, says Bernardino, is evident, "There is a way to silence the voices of criticism and at the same time to appease one's conscience: by covering up the reality of what is happening. Delegations from all over the world attend the United Nations, and they include women -- who go as secretaries or assistants. Very seldom, very rarely, does a woman head a delegation. That is the reality and that is where the discrimination lies."

The Work Continues

For Minerva Bernardino, the work and the feminist cause are still the engines that drive her life, the reasons for her untiring activity. Among other things, she is busy finishing her memoirs, *"Fight, Agony and Hope."* And a 30-minute film biography has just been completed. "It encompasses everything, from my childhood in El Seibo to my fight in the United Nations and will be shown at schools as an example of the life of a Latin-American woman." "The United Nations is the mirror of governments. There I dared to say anything to anyone, if that would help the cause of women. Once a delegate, in the midst of a discussion, said "who do you think you are, the Secretary-General?' I was quite clear. 'Yes, I am ...whenever it concerns women." ■

To the left, Dr. Bertha Lutz, Brazil. To the right, above Ms. Wu Yi-fang, China. Below, Dean Virginia C. Gildersleeve, United States.

Women in the Secretariat: *Putting the Principle into Practice*

The principle is enshrined in the UN Charter. "The United Nations shall place no restriction on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs." Carrying it out in practice has been slow, difficult and often contentious, just as it has been for women in the world outside the confines of the Secretariat. Many more women are recruited for General Service posts -- secretaries and other support staff --than for professional posts, and the women in higher, decision-making echelons (Directors, or "D-1 and above", in UN parlance) might be considered an endangered species, 37 out of 356 at last count. The UN is still very much a man's world, at least for professional staff.

Fighting the perpetual uphill battle against the odds at UN headquarters in New York is Suzan Habachy, the focal point for women in Secretariat posts around the world. She has only one assistant to help her in her job as both advocate and counsellor, a one-woman monitor of career cycles from recruitment to retirement and everything in between from promotions to maternity leaves. A daunting challenge to say the least.

She describes the current situation of women in the Secretariat (this does not include women in independent bodies like INSTRAW, UNICEF, or the specialized agencies) as one of "very slow improvement." In the three years since she was appointed, she has seen an increase of about 1% a year in the number of women in professional posts, up from 26.9% in June 1989 to just over 30% in 1992. General Assembly resolutions have helped; they have set targets of 35% by 1995, and "to the extent possible", 25% at D-1 and above. These goals are unlikely to be met: the 1992 figure is two years behind schedule. Absolute equality, or 50% in professional posts, could not be attained until about 2005, if then!

Conflicting Priorities

The sluggishness of the UN response, says Ms. Habachy, cannot be attributed solely to simple discrimination against women. The system tends to reinforce the traditional men's network among

diplomats and Secretariat professionals: Article 101 specifies that "due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible." Although the Secretariat, as a professional civil service, is theoretically insulated from national influences, in practice, Habachy says, "Member States do get involved in nominating candidates, particularly for the higher level posts, and overwhelmingly they tend to nominate men. Women coming through the system don't command the same kind of network and support."

The principle of geographical distribution, in fact may be diametrically opposed to the General Assembly mandate to recruit more women for professional posts, even if they are qualified or available; "If there must be a woman, a country risks not having *anyone* in the Secretariat." A hypothetical example given by Ms. Habachy would be a case of a highly qualified woman from the Philippines as opposed to a qualified male candidate from a country like Kuwait. According to a rather arcane formula based roughly on contributions to the UN budget, the Philippines is assigned a "desirable range" of posts of around 16, but is currently over-subscribed, at 70. The post would therefore most probably go to the Kuwaiti man...

The Philippines example illustrates another problem which complicates the situation still further: presumably equitable practices of recruitment through competitive examination. This is the mechanism by which General Service personnel are offered promotion to the professional ranks. Men and women from the Philippines have done so well that their numbers in professional posts have risen dramatically -- the reason for the over-subscription and the skew-

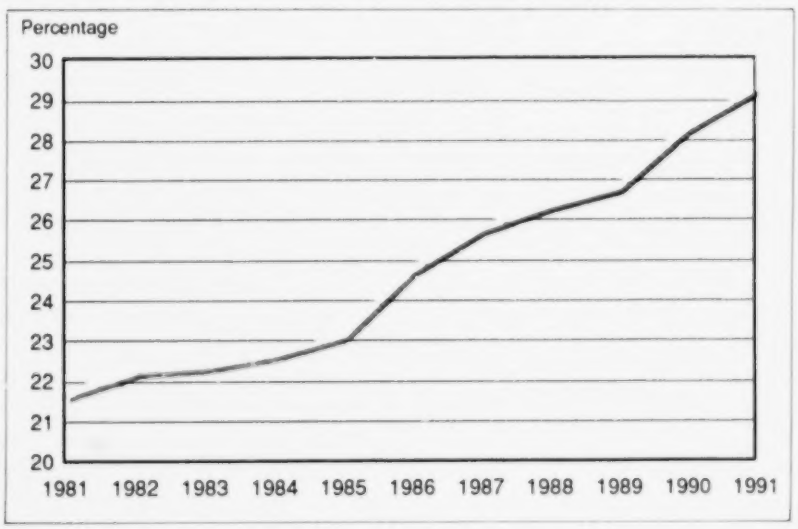
WOMEN IN THE SECRETARIAT: *A FEW FACTS AND FIGURES*

- In 1981, less than 22% of professional posts were filled by women.
- In 1992, the figure was 30.2%.

AS OF 30 JUNE 1991:

- 19 Departments had more than 30% of women in professional posts.
- 22 Departments do not.
- Only 8.6% of higher level posts (D-1 and above) were held by women.

Representation of women in posts subject to geographical distribution: *1981-1991*



DURING THE YEAR WHICH ENDED THAT DAY:

- Less than 1/3 of the 170 professional staff recruited were women.
- None were appointed to Under or Assistant Secretary-General (USG or ASG) levels.
- Only 4 women were appointed Directors.

ing of the geographical distribution.

A second set of examinations further muddies matters: those given in countries who are underrepresented. Unfortunately, this second attempt at equity doesn't always net women, either. There are still 70 member states without a single woman in the Secretariat, including countries such as Costa Rica. However 29 also had no men on posts subject to geographical distribution. During 1990, the Dutch Mission to the UN nominated 48 candidates, but only two women. Clearly, as the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies state, the situation requires "intensified efforts and cooperation with the Member States."

Effecting Change

In working to change the situation, given the severe constraints under which she must function, Ms. Habachy says she gives priority to making the managers, the supervisors within the system, "conscious of the imbalance and of their responsibilities to fulfill the mandate of the Assembly resolutions, in other words an absolute ***necessity*** to change." She is not content to wait for a whole generation of top-level male UN officials to retire, but rather works closely with her colleagues within the Department of Personnel to change attitudes.

Training in gender sensitivity is now a routine component in supervisory management training and is mandatory for all new staff, both men and women. The topics include sexual harassment (the "ultimate horror"), the elimination of gender bias in language ("not every reference should be to 'his', 'he' or 'him'), and some very effective "example sessions."

Finally, there are the sessions with role models, women who have made it to the upper levels. One attributes her success to a mentor, another to lucky timing; only rarely, however, are women actually in policy-making positions. For example, says Ms. Habachy, "A professional woman in a section dealing with disarmament is there most probably doing administrative work, not talking about nuclear plants in Iraq."

Also high on the list of problems involved in breaking the "glass ceiling" is the budgetary pinch. To reach the Assembly target of 25% by 1995, virtually *all* senior posts would have to be filled by women -- and no posts at all are being filled because of cuts and a hiring freeze.

Counseling and Career Development

As the focal point for women, Ms. Habachy must deal with a maze of bureaucratic regulations with regard to appointments, promotions, reviews, and recourse procedures, not to mention the Staff Council. Fostering career development for women, in short, can be tricky. For instance, implementation of the action plan for the "advancement of women" in the Secretariat must not officially be perceived as affirmative action. The result: no woman has ever won a case proving she wasn't promoted because she was a woman. One the other hand, only one or two women have been successful in using recourse procedures to obtain promotions based on qualifications. In short, a Catch-22.

There are some positive steps being taken, however. In 1988, for example, a measure was adopted permitting "cumulative seniority" in two preceding grades for women as a standard for promotion. This means that women, who are far more likely than men to spend long years at relatively low levels, can have those years count toward eligibility for promotion.

The UN has also been liberal in its benefits: flexible hours, flexible place, job-sharing and part-time work are allowed if

agreed to by a supervisor. (In practice, this is by and large limited to assignments such as translation and editing which can be done in sections or at home.) In addition, the UN allows generous maternity leave and helps fund a child care centre in New York.

Having women's advocates in headquarters cities other than New York would, of course, be helpful, Budgetary restrictions tend to preclude that option, but there is some hope that focal points for Geneva and Vienna will be appointed soon. In the meantime, Ms. Habachy has to rely on her own travel and communications with colleagues -- and to an increasing concern within the staff with the problems of women. In Vienna, for example, the head of the Staff Council is now a woman.

In general, progress continues to be made -- at a snail's pace. Whether the re-structuring of the Organization and a new action programme requested by the General Assembly will help speed the process is questionable, however. The subject has been on the agenda since 1973. ■

DESD and the New TCD: *Women in the Mainstream*

As INSTRAW's first Director, a post she held for ten years, Dunja Pastizzi-Ferencic always liked to talk about bringing women into the "male stream." And that is precisely where she is today, the Director of one of eight newly created Divisions in the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD). The Division, formerly part of TCD, or Technical Cooperation for Development, now has the tongue-twisting title of Science, Technology, Energy, Environmental and Natural Resources. No easy acronym has yet been devised for it, but even if it isn't referred to by its full name, the Division is probably one area which would be assumed to be headed by a man -- as indeed it had been. A specialist in economic development, Ms. Ferencic is uniquely qualified both for her official post as Director and her other major responsibility, WID focal point for all of DESD as well as Chairperson of its Women's Task Force.

Established immediately after the 1975 Mexico City Conference, the Task Force was the first institutional follow-up to the Conference in the UN system. It meets approximately once a month to review new documents and projects to make sure that women's needs have been adequately addressed. As Ms. Ferencic herself said, "development officials have a very limited understanding of development problems as they relate to women so we have to convey a basic message."

The Division itself provides the services of experts and advisors and carries out country-based development projects in close collaboration with governments and relevant agencies within the UN system. With very limited resources from the regular UN budget, the Division supports innovative or "catalytic" projects; additional funding, based on specific proposals,

comes from governments, and multilateral agencies such as UNDP and UNFPA.

WID in Action: A Well is More than Water

It is in UN field projects that many economic development theories are tested -- and where they have historically failed in the absence of the women's perspective. Nowhere has that been more obvious than in the area of water resources and sanitation, specifically the many wells which were drilled and pumps installed in rural areas only to fall into disrepair and disuse while local women once again had to carry jugs from streams many miles -- and hours -- away. The reason was simple: the women who were to be the primary users of the water had not been asked for advice at any point in the process.

This is where the WID component comes in. In Mauritania, for example, a routine project was approved, to drill a well in the rural western part of the country. As a result of WID intervention, a key socio-economic dimension was added, a small-scale irrigation project around the well so that the women could cultivate vegetables for income. In addition, the local women were asked what type and design of pump would be easiest to use and, perhaps most important, they were given training in pump maintenance. In another African project, a warehouse for spare parts was built as yet a further step in the process.

A major emphasis now is to recruit women as national experts, the counterpart personnel required in virtually all UN-assisted projects, and to encourage governments to appoint women to high level posts in ministries with authority in these areas. In addition, there is a major effort being made to recruit international experts in relevant fields such as hydrology and marketing and management in which the number of women is still extremely low. There is one female geologist at UN headquarters in New York -- but she is a rare exception.

Workshop in Beijing: The Task Force Tackles Agenda 21

As this issue of *INSTRAW News* goes to press, DESD, in cooperation with INSTRAW, is convening a workshop in Beijing on the role of women in environmentally sound and sustainable development. It is the first collective effort for the Department and the Women's Task Force since the restructuring of the Department and the first major UN focus on the environment since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) adopted its ambitious Agenda 21 in Rio de Janeiro in June.

The workshop is intended to be global in scope, and to generate new ideas and approaches to strengthening the role of women, particularly rural women, in the design and implementation of sustainable development programmes. More than 100 participants were expected to attend, including 25 invited participants from developing countries, representatives of environmental groups and other NGOs, governments, and the regional development banks. The official Chinese hosts are the Chinese Society of Science and Technology and the All-China Women's Federation.

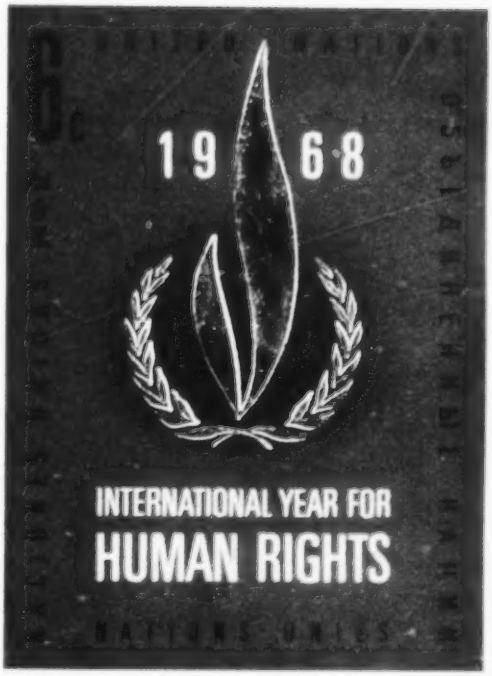
The workshop was originally conceived primarily as a forum for discussion of environmentally sound technologies, but its agenda is now much more comprehensive. It is action-oriented and is intended to identify or develop generic or model projects in various sectors which would be suitable candidates for special funding. Among the issues the projects will address are the alleviation of poverty, human health, the relationship between population growth and sustainable develop-

ment, women and conservation of biodiversity, and the participation of women in environmental decision-making, planing and management. Approximately 30 proposals were received from within the UN system, most involving specific training in fields ranging from women and construction to small-scale projects in industry and irrigation. Others are clearly designed for income-generation.

In addition to discussion of the proposals themselves, the workshop will help hone women's skills in their relations with governments and improve their fund-raising techniques. Finally, and most important, its objective is to create greater awareness among all the participants of environmental issues as a whole, their inherent complexities, and the pitfalls likely to be encountered in designing projects, raising funds and finally in actually carrying them out.

There have been many thousands of words printed about the need to include women in environmental planning and other decision-making, the effort by Ms. Ferencic and her colleagues marks a giant step forward in moving questions related to women and the environment, (and other development issues as well) from lip service to concrete action. ■

Centre for Human Rights: *Will Women be Included?*



It might be assumed that women's rights are automatically included in any human rights agenda. This is not necessarily true, particularly within the UN system where separation between the two is both institutional and geographic. The Commision on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the secretariat for both, the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) is based in Vienna; the Human Rights Commission and other bodies concerned with human rights are based in Geneva. It was not until 1984 that the topic of "prevention of discrimination and protection of women" was even included as a *sub*-item on the agenda of the Commission on Human Rights. It took another two years for an item on "the role and equal participation of women in development" to appear.

In June, 1993, however, there will be a dramatic opportunity to bring them all together: the first World Conference on Human Rights in 25 years will be held in Vienna. A number of women's and human rights organizations and some governments as well are currently spearheading a drive to have women's issues specifically included on the Conference agenda as an inherent and indivisible aspect of human rights as a whole.

Some First Steps: Focus on Health

Some progress has already been made. In 1992, the Centre for Human Rights, the secretariat for the Commission, was instructed to provide a full-time professional staff member to follow up "the question of traditional practices affecting the health of women and children and liaise with governments, United Nations bodies... and other concerned institutions, with special emphasis on gathering data from the many organizations currently working to eliminate harmful traditional practices."

"This decision came to enhance a process which made a major breakthrough in 1986 when the Commission on Human Rights completed a Study on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. The link was then made between such practices as female circumcision, facial scarification, early arranged marriages, and preferential treatment for male children on one hand and "violations of human rights within the meaning of the relevant provisions of the International Bill of Rights and many other international instruments" on the other. As a follow-up to the 1986 report, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities has since appointed a Special Rapporteur who follows developments in this area."

To the many people involved with women's issues who feel that the existing human rights establishment is not responsive enough to the urgency of the situation of women, this is only a tentative first step. There are many other critical issues within the meaning of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, not least "the right to life, liberty and the security of person." An increase in the incidence of all forms of violence against women, including rape and incest, is just one example. While many bodies within the UN system are concerned with one or more specific types of discrimination against women, it is in the intrinsic meaning of human rights as the philosophic basis for most contemporary political, economic and social institutions that all these concerns are encompassed.

Women, both within and outside the United Nations are demanding to be heard in Vienna as equals and as partners. If their efforts are successful, the 1995 Beijing Conference two years later will have been given greater credibility, greater meaning, and greater effect. ■

INIA: THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGEING

Only four years old, INIA, based in Malta, has already published a special issue on problems and issues facing elderly women, in the November 1991 issue of its quarterly journal, *BOLD*.

OTHER ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Encouraging sponsorship of women from developing countries for its training programmes. 106 women from 31 developing countries have participated in the past two years.
- Emphasizing specific concerns of women in its courses, e.g. the special needs of elderly women for income security.
- Highlighting "women's aspect" in research, statistical analyses and publications.
- Including women's issues in regular courses such as social gerontology and geriatrics.

The UN Statistical Division: *Where Numbers Talk*

Most people are aware that women get paid less than men, but how many know how *much* less? Statistics show that even when women do the same work as men, they receive an average of 30 to 40 per cent less, world-wide. Women work as much or more than men everywhere--as much as 13 hours more each week in Asia and Africa. Women and girls in Asia and Africa may spend 5 to 17 hours per week just collecting and carrying water, but this work is usually NOT officially counted nor recognized.

As stated in the beginning sentences of the widely acclaimed publication *The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics*, numbers give words power --the power to make people aware of reality, the power to describe how women's lives are changing or not changing, and ultimately the power to influence policy. Numbers have an advocacy role as well as an important role in programme planning and evaluation.

The Basics

The United Nations Statistical Division (UNSTAT) gives priority in its gender statistics programme to compiling and providing statistics for users who are not accustomed to using them and who cannot otherwise easily obtain them. Mainly based on information made available by national governments to a network of international statistical services, UNSTAT compiles, organizes, compares, and carefully analyzes the data, then publishes or presents them in formats that are useful to a wide range of users.

The publications and databases prepared by this programme often in collaboration with other United Nations agencies including INSTRAW, include: *The Compendium of Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women in 1986*, several wall charts, the United Nations Women's Indicators and Statistics Database (Wistat), considered the major database on women for 178 countries and areas in the world, and finally *The World's Women: 1970-1990*, a United Nations "best-seller" with sales of over 15,000 copies and now available in three languages with five additional languages in preparation.

Coordination and collaboration are important to UNSTAT's success. "User orientation" is considered the key; compiling and analyzing the data from the perspective of its users who can best identify their own problems and therefore their data needs. In other words, to link data to policy issues and projects, it is critical to think about the use of data and to ensure cooperation between producers and users.

In their decade of collaboration to improve gender statistics,

INSTRAW has had the role of user, identifying issues of primary concern to research organizations and people at the grassroots level; the UNSTAT serves as producer of the data. "Interaction between users and producers is important for both sides", stresses Ms. Joann Vanek, Coordinator of the Gender Statistics Programme in the Statistical Division.

Work at the National Level

An important part of the Statistical Division's programme in gender statistics is in the fields of technical cooperation. The United Nations is helping countries develop and improve their statistics and indicators on women through such general data development projects as censuses and surveys and through special women's projects. For example, UNSTAT has collaborated with INSTRAW and other international organizations in seminars which bring statisticians from National agencies together with national users. The Division is currently involved in projects such as developing a "Data Base on the Status of Women" in Kenya, and improving survey methods for measuring women's economic activity in Honduras.

Ms. Vanek stressed the importance of work at the national level since users in countries have been the driving force for improved statistics in their own countries and in turn this has important effects on what is done and available at the national level.

UNSTAT and the Informal Sector

An important part of improving statistical systems is improving methods and concepts. How to compile data, especially in difficult areas such as the informal sector, and how to define and measure culturally-relevant concepts such as "work" have been major areas of attention and challenge. The collaboration between the Statistical Division and INSTRAW, began with an expert group meeting held in 1983 and the preparation of two basic documents: *Compiling Social Indicators on the Situation of Women* and *Improving Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women*. Recently, work with INSTRAW has focused on economic statistics and women's roles in the informal sector[1].

Difficulties and challenges still remain. A lack of basic data on women, especially in developing countries, continues to be a major problem. Even where they exist, statistics may be difficult to find or are not easily understood by non-statisticians. In addition, simply producing statistics is difficult; it is often time-consuming, costly and requires qualified staff.

There is another problem: women remain a minority in the statistical profession. In order to raise gender-awareness among statisticians it is important to increase the number of women statisticians. Also needed are disaggregations of all relevant indicators by gender, such as mortality rates and other health indicators which are often not gender-disaggregated. Quantifying and assigning value to unpaid housework requires special attention as well.

There is still a long way to go. The Statistical Division is currently working on a second edition of the *World's Women*. It will be a basic document for the 1995 Fourth World Women's Conference in China and will update statistics in the first edition and present topics such as "women in the media". We hope to see that the new numbers show inaprovements in women's situation worldwide. ■

[1] See, for example, *Improving Statistics and Indicators on Women Using Household Surveys* (Statistical Office and INSTRAW, United Nations publication Sales No. E.88.XVII.11), *Methods of Measuring Women's Participation and Production in the Informal Sector* (Statistical Office and INSTRAW, United Nations publication, E.90.XVII.16) [plus African *Handbook* and *Synthesis*].

NGOs: *Agents for Outreach*

From the beginning, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been recognized as indispensable to the effectiveness of the United Nations. The Charter, in Article 71 calls for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to "make suitable arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence." The formal arrangements were only the beginning: the large, parallel NGO forums that have been a part of every major international conference since the first UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 are widely accepted informal mechanisms for exchanging opinions and information.

In fact, it was the NGO Women's Tribune at Mexico City that gave the International Women's Conference its special flavor -- and led to a new word and a new strategy, networking, a means of bridging cultural and ideological gaps by reaching out to others for expertise and ideas on how to achieve common objectives. The tradition continues: there will again be a forum, open to everyone, held in conjunction with the 1995 Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing.

The Mechanics in Brief

The day to day working relationship between the UN and the NGO community is carefully defined and structured, and directly tied to the international agenda. The basic framework for NGO participation in the operations of the United Nations is the "consultative status" with ECOSOC provided for in the Charter. A special committee of the Council screens and approves all applicants. Their work must be relevant to ECOSOC's overall functions, they must be international, non-profit, "representative in character" e.g. have individual members and/or national or local branches, "and have recognized international standing", i.e. have some form of official, legal and financial status. On rare occasions this "Category I" status may be granted to a national organization with a unique area of expertise, such as the Gray Panthers. Of the approximately 950 organizations in Category I, almost 50 are women's organizations, and this figure does not include the majority of NGOs with more general interests. Category II NGOs are those with a narrower, special technical expertise; an NGO "roster" includes those with formal relationship to the specialized agencies and other bodies within the UN system.

Once given consultative status, an NGO may attend all open sessions of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, may propose agenda items and make statements. An NGO's most important function, however, is the one implied in the word "consultative." The organizations function as a channel for infor-

mation and communications between the UN, its member governments and the grass roots. For example, an NGO, through its national affiliate, is likely to know of the other organizations or individuals working on a development project in a given country or locality. Conversely, recognition of an organization by the UN lends credibility to that organization's relationship with national and local governments.

The Women's Network

NGOs have been in the forefront of the women's movement from the beginning. In fact, some people credit the NGO community with having effectively started it in the first place. Today, there are a variety of both formal and informal mechanisms available for both communication and active participation in UN activities on behalf of women.

In addition to their continuing work on women in development and other issues NGOs are now focusing on preparations for the Beijing Conference. The first in a series of consultations began in 1990 in the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, which had been established after the Mexico City Conference. The Committee now has three special planning groups for Beijing, located in New York, Geneva and Vienna, the headquarters of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the secretariat and preparatory bodies for the Conference respectively. In addition to its official participation in the Conference itself, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women will be responsible for the organization of the NGO Forum as well.

The Beijing Forum

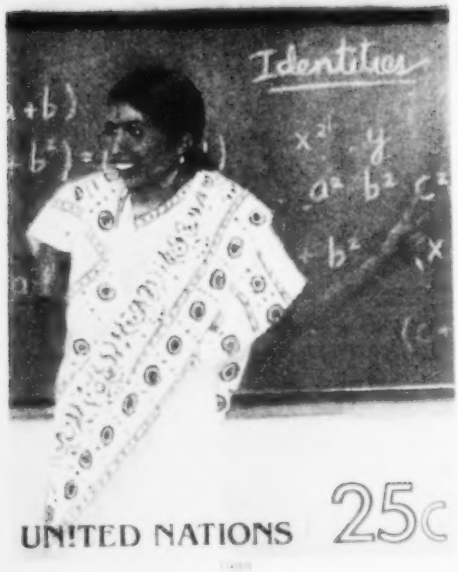
No formal agenda has as yet been drafted, but some basic themes have already become apparent, all rooted in an increasing momentum for change and the recognition that both discussions and action on the status of women are at a crucial turning point. A meeting held in New York in June 1992 articulated a three-point action NGO strategy for both the Conference and the Forum: changing attitudes, coalition building and conflict resolution. Further substantive NGO preparation at the regional and national levels will involve evaluation of progress made toward implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies (NFLS), a critical analysis of how to build on it, and recommendations for future action to be made to the Commission on the Status of Women.

Some of the general guidelines and objectives drawn up for NGO activities are indicative of the key link they can provide between official and unofficial efforts. They include: involvement of diverse groups, global communication among women, grass roots perspectives and sensitivity to local conditions. Interaction among women and women's organizations is considered paramount. For instance, one proposal now under consideration is for a Global Women's Day at the Beijing Forum, to be highlighted by a satellite link between Beijing and other women's meetings all over the world.

An NGO Sampler of Women's Activities: Filling the Information Gap

Less dramatic, but no less important are the regular day-to-day activities of the NGOs, both women's organizations and those with broader mandates. Space permits only two examples: The World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) now has its own Women's Caucus and its first women President, Mrs. Androula Vassiliou, the First Lady of Cyprus. She reports that discussions and correspondence on women and

International Volunteer Day



women's issues are now much more frequent, more the norm than the exception.

More directly concerned with information activities on women in development is the International Women's Tribune Centre. The Tribune Centre literally plugs the information and communications gap, sending information to women in the developing countries on what is being done by various UN agencies, who is doing it and where. The UN's own communications mechanisms are frequently used to send this information, most often UNDP's daily diplomatic pouch to its resident representative offices. The Tribune's own network of contacts in the field are also mobilized to reinforce the UN's efforts, whether as participants in a regional planning meeting or as local resources for a development project.

There is one last piece in the NGO puzzle, the connection between the United Nations and NGOs who do *not* have formal consultative status with ECOSOC. Most are accredited to the UN Department of Public Information (DPI). They have access to UN documentation and may be observers at all public meetings, without any official status or rights to active participation. Their functions are largely reportorial --another link in the information chain. Operating through the UN's NGO Liaison Service, for example, a joint UN-NGO Group on Women and Development was established in 1980 to produce and distribute education materials for NGOs as well as educational institutions, government ministries, etc. Membership in the group is open to all interested organizations. Topics covered in its publications so far have included women and disability, women and health, women and shelter, and, most recently, women and the world economic crisis. Production is supervised by editorial panels of 10 to 15 representatives from NGOs and UN agencies.

In short, the NGOs and their activities are as diverse as the groups and interests they represent. They are the crucial agents for outreach for the entire UN system. They are, in fact, the "peoples of the United Nations" on which the Charter is based. ■

The Regional Commissions: *Reflections of Diversity*

Their name is self-defining: the regional commissions reflect the very differences in cultures, political and economic institutions and stages of development which were the reasons for their creation. In fact, there are variations even within the five regions; the effectiveness of activities undertaken, particularly with regard to women, varies as well.

Tayseer Abdel Jaber,
Executive Secretary / ESCWA
UN Photo / J. Isaac

Gerald Hinteregger,
Executive Secretary / ECE
Un Photo

Gert Rosenthal
Executive Secretary / ECLAC
UN Photo / Y. Nagata

Rafeeuddin Ahmed
Under-Secretary-General /
ESCAP
UN Photo / Milton Grant

A Review of the Basics

There are five regional commissions, for Latin-America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), for Africa (ECA), for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), for Europe (ECE), and for Western Asia (ESCWA). They are subsidiaries of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), established to help the Council carry out its work between sessions. The Commissions operate on limited resources and are therefore unable to undertake field projects; rather they act as clearing houses for information within regions, undertaking small, selected projects, primarily seminars or training workshops, and in general performing a catalytic function within the larger UN framework. Together with the rest of the UN system, the commissions are mandated to increase the equality and participation of women in development by supporting national actions with studies and recommendations, coordinating activities with other bodies in the UN system in their respective regions, and carrying out specific projects where appropriate. However, with only one or two staff people available, the commissions' women's programmes, if there are any, are usually buried in the nebulous category of "social development". This is the flip side of an often dismissive attitude on the part of men when faced with an admittedly daunting agenda of other political, economic and social issues as well. Any concrete achievements are therefore largely the product of the commitment and tenacity of the women who are given the responsibility for carrying out the UN mandate. For this and a variety of other reasons as well, the results are inconsistent.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

One of the most active and effective of the regional commissions, ECLAC's work on women's issues actually preceded the Mexico City conference, so that only two years later, in 1977, the Commission was able to approve a Regional Plan of Action, and a special women's unit was established. Over the years, close working relationships were developed, not only with governments, but also with women's organizations at both the national and grass roots level. The result has been a dynamic programme of research, training and experimentation in areas ranging from the problems of migrant women to unemployment and underemployment in rapidly growing urban areas.

The world-wide economic crisis of the 80s, decreased public spending on social services and increased poverty, especially among women, presented a challenge and ECLAC notes that women in the region showed great flexibility in responding to it, particularly in their search for income-generating activities. Gender-related issues were better articulated than ever before, greatly enhancing the scope of research and the debates over the results. In effect, the 80s marked the end of old patterns of development, with the shape of the new patterns yet undefined. Two assumptions have already been made: that economic development must keep pace with the rapid changes in science and technology shaping the global economy, and that the process must be carried out within a democratic -- and equitable -- framework. From the women's perspective, this will mean changes in cultural attitudes as well as changes in their economic and social status.

Within this context, ECLAC has defined three priority areas for action: 1) the conditions under which women participate in the workforce; 2) the incorporation of women's issues in governmental machinery, an old objective in need of more consistent and systematic implementation; and 3) changes in education with regard to content, perspective and methods to allow for more flexibility and choice for women. These and other issues such as political participation and violence against women are on the agenda for ECLAC's Fourth Regional Conference in 1994 and its preparations for the Beijing Conference.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

ECA takes its mandate, what the UN Development Programme (UNDP) calls "participatory development," very seriously; it is also realistic in its assessment of how much progress has been made and how much further it has to go. Much of its admittedly modest success can be attributed to the work of the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW), a subsidiary of the Commission established in 1975. The Centre works closely with other international agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Among its accomplishments, ATRCW has producted guidelines for governments with regard to women in development (WID) and a directory of all national, subregional and regional WID institutions and agencies; carried out a broad range of research and case studies and sponsored training workshops and seminars to improve women's managerial and entrepreneurial skills. In 1991, ATRCW recommended the establishment of a Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs which would, among other functions, provide an additional network for would-be entrepreneurs and establish links between rural and urban businesswomen.

ECA also sponsors regular WID conferences. The fourth regional conference was held in Abuja, Nigeria in 1989, at which it was agreed that "in the best of times, there is no automatic link between economic growth and improvement in the situation of women... an examination of the impact of adjustment policies on women, both in relation to their participation in economic development and to the support of their families, reveals a negative impact on women." There were statistics to reinforce that statement, on the greater rates of unemployment among women, poorer health status, higher drop-out rates at the secondary school level, etc. In response, the Abuja Declaration, adopted by consensus at the conclusion of the conference, set some very ambitious goals as Target 2000, e.g. parity in literacy, 40% of university enrolment, 20% of that to be in science and technology, at and least one in five vacant government professional posts to be filled by women.

The next regional WID Conference, to be held in 1994, will again assess progress and probably set still further goals. In the meantime there is reason for both hope and concern. The concern is over the abolition of some of the national machinery for women that had previously been established. The hope is in the political change and democratization sweeping the continent. The women of Africa are seen as having an unprecedented opportunity to fit themselves more securely into the political, social and economic patterns of the future.

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

ESCAP's women's agenda and problems are the same as elsewhere -- more work, less pay, less access to health care and education, few public offices for women, etc. -- but machinery to deal with them has not yet been formalized. There is no separate ESCAP women's unit or institution, but rather one senior officer within the Commission's Social Development Division, albeit an articulate and dynamic representative and spokeswoman, by all accounts.

Even without a specific institutional framework, however, ESCAP has sponsored a large number and variety of training workshops, including several in cooperation with INSTRAW. The Commission also reviews an agenda of selected issues at each of its sessions, e.g. government mechanisms to achieve gender equality. In addition, at least partly in response to ESCAP's efforts, national women's bureaux or ministries have been established in many countries of the region. ESCAP also reports that WID activities at all levels, particularly by NGOs, has noticeably increased in recent years.

The tempo appears to be picking up: preparations for the World Conference on Women in Beijing will include an ESCAP ministerial conference in 1993 at which a regional action plan is expected to be adopted. ESCAP will then have a more specific framework for its future activities.

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

ECE has no formal women's programme. It does, however, participate in all relevant meetings and conferences, and has been particularly active in the field of statistics on women. ECE's Conference of European Statisticians, for example, began collaborative efforts with INSTRAW in 1985 on a continuing project on statistics and indicators on the role and situation of women. Work at a series of joint meetings has focused on several important issues: improved measurement of women's participation in the formal sector and, most recently, evaluations of time-use surveys to measure the value of women's unpaid work, the subject of a new long-term INSTRAW project. The results of these joint statistical studies will be included as part of ECE's preparations for the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing.

Another possible area of collaboration with INSTRAW is in assessing the training needs of rural women in the transitional economies of eastern Europe. INSTRAW is undertaking a model exchange program with farm women from Bulgaria and Hungary to acquaint them with farm operations in the United States, helping them learn the management, marketing, and other requirements of a market economy. The women will then begin to prepare strategic plans for their own countries and communities.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Because of the Gulf War, ESCWA has not been operational for a year and a half. Even prior to the war, the Commission had been forced to move its headquarters several times, further inhibiting its effectiveness. In short, political developments in the region have continually overshadowed economic and social concerns. Some activities were undertaken, however, administrative and technical assistance to literacy programmes, for example, and publication of a directory of professional Arab women in technical cooperation activities. A meeting in 1989 of a working group on alternative choices for Arab women was also held as scheduled.

The Commission staff has been reassembled in Amman and there is now hope that a more consistent work programme may be undertaken. The 1995 Women's Conference may provide the necessary impetus. ■

UNICEF: *Equality for Tomorrow's Women*

Few UN programmes are as widely known and respected as UNICEF, the UN Children's Fund. The familiar mother and child logo is found on almost everything from disaster relief supplies and health care centres in the developing world to the greeting cards sold world-wide to help support them. Created by the General Assembly at its first session in 1946 to meet post-war emergency needs, UNICEF's mandate was expanded in 1950 to include long-range programmes for children in the developing countries. From the beginning, UNICEF's priorities were maternal and child health, education and nutrition.

By the mid-1980's, however, it became apparent that some change or re-interpretation of UNICEF's objectives was necessary to meet an as yet unacknowledged challenge: the "double disadvantage" of being born both poor and female. The facts are familiar and distressing, particularly in the developing countries: women are the poorest of the poor; their literacy rate is two-thirds that of men; as children, they not only get less education, but less food and health care as boys. As teen-agers, they account for 25% of the deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth.

The vicious cycle of poverty begins at birth: the undernourished, under-educated girl child becomes the undernourished, under-educated -- and under-valued -- adult woman who then gives life to another generation no better, if not worse off than her own. UNICEF's work on behalf of children clearly needed an additional emphasis on girls, both as today's children and tomorrow's women.

The new priority, a supplement, not a substitute for UNICEF's traditional programmes, was based on both non-discrimination language in the 1959 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1990 Declaration of the World Summit for Children: "Strengthening the role of women in general and ensuring their equal rights will be to the advantage of the world's children. Girls must be given equal treatment and opportunities from the very beginning."

UNICEF's work in education, health and nutrition provide a natural framework for its efforts on behalf of girls. A specific agenda, together with a series of policy recommendations to

governments, is now being integrated into each of UNICEF's overall national programmes. Some of the most basic problems, however, do not fall neatly into these categories, most notably those related to cultural or religious traditions in which boys are valued more highly than girls. In addition, women are generally thought of as under 19 or 20. In reality, however, they are often being treated as adults as early as 10 or 11, when they routinely take care of children, cook, grow and sell food; by 15 they may already be married and their asymmetrical pattern of relationships to men already set.

Bringing about change in attitude and tradition is a very slow process, however, and can only be done indirectly, without even the perception of coercion. UNICEF is therefore taking a remedial approach to the problem of the girl child in both concept and practice, by integrating appropriate components into its regular programmes.

Nutrition: Basic but Unequal

In many developing countries girls are weaned earlier, their weaning diets less nourishing and their childhood portions smaller than their brothers'. Their mothers are, in effect, reinforcing a tradition of ceding priority to the males in the distribution of the family's food. UNICEF's response is to use its community-based health services as channels for observation, education, and specially designed feeding programmes where needed.

Health Care: Neglect Can Be Fatal

Sex bias in health care presents a daunting challenge. Although there are no reliable sex disaggregated infant mortality figures and very few comparative statistics on the frequency and quality of care by gender, recent studies indicate, that more boys are immunized and treated in hospitals and girls are usually far sicker before they are brought in. Sometimes even UNICEF's own clinics list their young patients only as "children."

There are other, more insidious dangers inherent in being female : deliberate neglect of girls may in part account for an estimated 100 million *fewer* women in some areas than demographic trends would indicate; female excision is still practiced in at least 25 countries, with attendant psychological as well as medical risks; early and frequent childbearing also takes a heavy toll, as does resort to prostitution. In some African countries, girls aged 15 to 19 run 4 to 10 times the risk of contracting the AIDS virus as do males of the same age.

While no international agency can correct the underlying causes for these conditions, UNICEF is helping provide additional health and social services. And good working relationships with national and local officials can foster a climate more conducive to change. Its policy recommendations on health care, for example, include efforts to produce gender-specific data, with special attention paid to disparities among children in different socio-economic and cultural groups within a country.

Education: The Heart of the Matter

Closely related to health care is the question of schooling and the disproportionate workload borne by girls. In Java, for example most girls spend at least 33% more hours a day working at home and in the market as boys; in some age groups the figure rises to 85%. Yet in most countries, studies indicate that parents feel boys are more productive and entitled to more education.

This, in fact, is the core of the problem. Education is both

remedy and prevention. But the problem goes beyond that of equal access to education although access is crucial. Attitude is also important: parents must *want* their daughters to go to school and the girls themselves must want to stay there. This requires special attention to such basics as separate toilet facilities for girls and boys. (In at least one instance, UNICEF claims this led to lower drop-out rate among adolescent girls.)

It also means more female teachers, particularly in areas where religious or cultural traditions demand segregation. It might also mean non-formal schooling. One programme, established by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in 1984 was designed to fit into children's daily and seasonal work schedules as well as parental preferences. The schools now reach 90,000 students, 79% of whom are girls. 75% of the teachers are women.

The status, respect and productivity of these girls, when they themselves become adult women, will have been built on the foundations of their childhoods. ■

Women and UNDP

The 1975 International Women's Conference was a milestone for UNDP's concern for women. Since then the Organization has attempted to take into account the fact that women as well as men represent a resource to development, and has made a conscious effort to increase the number of women in the Organization. A post for an advisor for women in development was established shortly after the Mexico City Conference within its Technical Advisory Division, and then, on 1 April 1987, the Administrator established a Division for Women in Development within the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation.

Policies and Procedures

The Division has focused on the development of policy and operational guidelines to promote consciousness-raising and to integrate WID concerns into country programming and project preparation. In response to requests from field offices, the Division has also designed, implemented and evaluated training in skills devel-

opment and gender analysis for UNDP, the UN system at the field level and Government personnel.

Toward the end of the eighties, UNDP's Division for Women in Development decided to establish a baseline data base to measure progress made by UNDP in integrating women's concerns in technical cooperation activities. A questionnaire was sent to headquarters operational units and the field offices in 114 countries. The responses to the questionnaire indicated more awareness of WID and greater interest in and desire for increased support in mainstreaming, now a UNDP priority.

Demand from field offices for WID advisory services, data collection and analysis and research was expected to increase substantially, and it was clear that a new approach would be necessary to meet the increased demand for assistance from field offices to ensure that a more focused, issue-oriented and country/region specific strategy is adopted.

Priority on Mainstreaming

In June 1990, the UNDP Governing Council requested UNDP to focus on building WID national capacities, and to continue to strengthen its own capacity and those of recipient countries to ensure that their activities are gender-sensitive. Provision of training and other support to field offices and governments at country level was stressed.

In October 1991, as a further step in mainstreaming WID, the WID Division was incorporated into the Human Development Group of the Programme Development and Support Division, which is responsible for four of the UNDP advocacy themes (poverty alleviation, NGO's and participatory development, management development and women in development).

Most recently, the Governing Council approved $8 million for the five-year period 1992-1997, earmarked from its Special Programme Resources for building WID national capacities and mainstreaming women's concerns in UNDP funded activities. This capacity building will include the development and/or improvement of skills and facilities in research, data collection and use, gender analysis, training, and networking of individual development workers, extension workers and other officials, grassroots women and men, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and institutions. Emphasis will also be placed on developing linkages with five other UNDP identified advocacy themes, thus ensuring the integration of gender within UNDP's programme approach.

Key elements of UNDP's strategy include the development of approaches to mainstreaming WID issues in all thematic areas identified by the Governing Council, the preparation of operational guidelines to assist field offices in implementing the WID mandate; the on-going provision of gender training for UNDP, UN Agency and Government personnel; and the encouragement and enabling of field offices to make increasing use of strengthened national and regional WID capacities for UNDP country programme and project preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Meeting the New Challenges

There are several challenges for women that must be addressed which vary in intensity by region and country. More and more women are entering the labour force, demanding their due rights and facing the challenges of living up to the demands of traditions and the requirements of modernization. These changes pose a major threat to the family and its role in society. The challenge will be to ensure a more egalitarian division

of labour, responsibility and status.

The threat to women's survival has been amply identified in the World's Women. Gender selective abortions and girl infanticide practices are a reflection of the lower value placed on girls and women as development resources and in society. The failure of the health systems to improve basic health services continues to affect the level of maternal mortality and the lower female child survival rate for children below the age of five. Other threats to women's lives and their survival include violence against women within the family, including dowry burning; sexual abuse such as rape; trafficking in women; and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The increase in percentages of women headed households poses a challenge for development workers: to devise new ways to help women meet the requirements of their dual roles.

The challenge still looms before WID agents in the identification of appropriate strategies for addressing issues of equity. This becomes even more complicated as more and more of the world's people (mostly women) get poorer and poorer, lacking in basic needs. To strike the appropriate balance between improving the basic conditions of women and focusing on the issue of improving women's status in their societies is indeed a challenge. The debate over whether WID should be about "women specific" support or incorporation and thus mainstreaming of WID issues into general support still goes on.

The political changes taking place in many parts of the world pose a big challenge on a broader scale. How can women ensure their active involvement so that they can impact on whateve new systems and structures emerge? How can women ensure that this time around they are not left on the sidelines? Is it possible that with women's involvement, the changes could lead to more equitable societies, to better world governance?

Women need the ability to speak and negotiate on their own behalf. Obstacles such as lack of information, lack of confidence, cultural practices and the social status of women stand in the way of women's empowerment. UNDP, with its world-wide network of field offices, development workers and a long list of close collaborators among both public and private organizations and individuals at all levels, is in a unique position to overcome these obstacles. ■

UNFPA: *Women, Population and Development*

The UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) is the largest multilateral donor in the population sector, providing assistance to population programmes in about 135 countries. Involvement in women, population and development has been a hallmark of the organization since its inception, and women's right to self-determination is recognized as one of the keys to development. Improving the status of women, a focus of UNFPA-assisted programmes for the decade of the 1990s, is far more than a humanitarian consideration; it is one of the best investments a country can make in the interest of its social and economic development.

ANNEE MONDIALE DE LA POPULATION

Policies and Programmes

In 1975, UNFPA issued guidelines for incorporating women into population and development, making it one of the first UN organizations to take such an initiative. Since then, UNFPA has deepened its commitment both in the allocation of financial resources and in the delineation of an explicit and multi-faceted strategy, the ultimate objective of which is the integration of women's concerns into all UNFPA-funded activities and the increased participation of women in all projects supported by the Fund. Under the strategy, special emphasis is placed on a comprehensive staff training programme in WPD; collaboration with other UN organizations; and strengthening NGOs, especially at the national levels, to enhance the role of women at the grass roots level.

In terms of programme areas, Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health is the largest single area supported by UNFPA, accounting for approximately 50 per cent of its funding. Priority is given to improving the health of women and children as part of an integrated approach to Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health, to activities aimed at improving these services and making them more accessible to women. UNFPA is committed to the Safe Motherhood Initiative, co-sponsored by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank as well as NGO partners, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the Population Council. Following the success of the first, advocacy phase of the initiative, most of UNFPA's support now takes place at country level.

UNFPA also supports activities, in the area of education for women through, for example, formal and non-formal education programmes for women, including functional literacy and population education. In addition, it supports economic activities for women which would improve their situation through providing better access to employment and credit. It collaborates closely with other UN agencies in the improvement of statistical data on women.

The Women, Population and Development (WPD) Branch of the Technical and Evaluation Division is responsible for awareness creation, advocacy and for providing guidance and technical support for operational activities. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Branch works closely with WPD focal points within UNFPA's major organizational units and with an Advisory Panel of experts from developed and developing countries. Approximately 41 per cent of its professional staff is female the goal being equal representation of men and women.

Achievements and Challenges

Important gains have been made in improving the status of women in the past two decades in several countries. Today 86 per cent of governments support family planning programmes and many countries now have solid experience with the effectiveness of strong programmes in lowering population growth rates; in improving the quality of life of the population, including the health of women and their families; and in enlarging women's life choices beyond excessive child bearing and rearing. Examples include China, Costa Rica, Mexico, Thailand, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and South Korea. These countries have widely promoted Family Planning/Maternal and Child Health as a health measure. At the same time they have attempted to secure women's fundamental rights, including that to education. Women in these societies now have sources of status and security other than a large number of children.

Experience has shown that women themselves are highly receptive to better health and family planning messages. The highly successful Matlab experiment in Bangladesh shows clearly that health care and social support delivered consistently over a long period makes a fundamental difference to women's fertility behavior, to their health and their capacity as mothers and workers. The lesson is that women, no matter how poor or powerless, respond very positively when their concerns as individuals are addressed with care and compassion.

At the same time of course, as is well known, gender disparities persist in every field, almost everywhere, including developed countries. The Amsterdam Declaration, entitled "A Better Life for Future Generations," was adopted by consensus by participants from 79 countries at the International Forum on Population in the 21st Century. The Declaration states that to be effective, a development strategy must reflect population concerns among its primary objectives and that the attainment of population goals and objectives rests on seven main pillars, one of which is strengthening the role and status of women. The Declaration goals for the year 2000 called for reductions in maternal mortality by at least 50 per cent and in infant mortality to at most 50 per 1000 live births; an increase in the availability of contraception to reach at least 56 per cent; and for increasing female literacy and achieving universal enrolment for girls in primary education. Priority should also be given to equal legal rights for women, to improving their economic status and to improving data collection systems to adequately document women's role and contribution in development.

HABITAT: *Perspectives on Shelter*

It is perhaps the most constraining tradition of all: a woman's home is her main responsibility; it is the place that defines her and yet rarely does she get to decide where, when or how to build it. Recent figures indicate that less than 10% of women are involved in the construction sector, and least of all as planners, designers or other decision-makers. Ironically, construction is a key factor in the development process, employing a large proportion of a country's labour force and contributing significantly to training in a wide range of skills. Increased involvement and participation of women would not only increase basic productivity, but also add an essential feminine perspective to important environmental considerations. Above all, participation in the construction sector would empower women with more choices and effectiveness in other mainstream development activities.

More than Housing

Creating such opportunities for women has been one of the major objectives of the UN Center for Human Settlements (HABITAT) since its establishment in 1978. HABITAT operates as an "enabling" agency to coordinate global efforts to provide adequate, affordable shelter for all by the end of the century. However, as its name suggests, HABITAT does not concern itself with housing alone, but rather with providing an opportunity for people to choose the conditions in which their communities will develop, with all the complex socio-economic components they require. Infrastructure -- water supply, sanitation, roads, etc. -- must be considered along with the availability of jobs, schools, social services, as well as the political institutions to manage them.

The task is a daunting one: in the last 40 years, the world's population has doubled, but ist urban population has tripled; one in every four people lives without the most rudimentary housing and sanitary facilities. In some developing countries, 30% to 50% of the housing is considered informal or "squatters." The potential for help by women is clearly enormous.

In 1985, as a follow-up to the

Nairobi Women's Conference, HABITAT and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) sponsored a joint conference on women and shelter in Vienna to familiarize governments and NGOs with some of the problems and possibilities involved. A series of regional conferences followed, to exchange information on pilot projects and to define and evaluate the role of women in the management of human settlements. The thrust of HABITAT's programmes evolved from these meetings.

Focus on the Informal Sector

From the beginning, it was clear that although women tended to participate in grass roots construction activities, their numbers shrink dramatically at the administrative and managerial levels. In the formal sector, there appears to be a tendency to steer women away from design and decision-making into interiors, public relations and even teaching. In addition, women face constraints similar to those they face in other mainstream sectors, primarily limited access to training and education and labour regulations which are often used as excuses for excluding women. In reality, particularly in developing countries, women are accustomed to heavy manual labour, but, denied high-level responsibilities, women tended to turn instead to the informal sector as small-scale contractors, craftsmen, apprentices, building materials producers and even real estate agents.

The key to mainstreaming women appears to be in bridging the gap between the formal and informal sectors. Within this context, HABITAT has undertaken several technical cooperation projects, co-sponsored with national governments and other external assistance agencies, which contain components offering training and assistance to women. Women are enlisted as active participants from the outset, frequently as national counterpart personnel as well. The women who took part in these projects gained experience in community participation, learned how to set up and manage credit facilities, participated in the design and construction of their homes, and were able to take advantage of employment opportunities in and around the project areas.

Projects have been carried out in both rural and urban areas. Some were not as successful as others, usually because too much was spent acquiring site-specific construction skills that were not needed or used again. Nevertheless, most of HABITAT's technical cooperation projects achieved HABITAT's overall objectives, to take women's needs into account and to upgrade and make use of their skills. Not least, an important theory was put into practice, namely that women could participate at different stages in the provision of shelter in different capacities *without any additional cost* to the project. Involvement of women in human settlements development is more often an organizational issue rather than a financial one. ■

WHO: *Women, Health and Development*

The World Health Organization's (WHO) response to the integration of women in development is its programme on Women, Health and Development (WHD), which reflects the complex relationships between the health of women and their social, political, cultural and economic situations and is consistent with the Organization's mandate on the broad aspects of health. The WHD programme focuses specifically on three areas: the promotion of health for women and women as beneficiaries of health care; women as providers of health care; and improving women's education and overall status as a means of enhancing their contribution to health and socio-economic development. Member States have committed themselves and, through a series of resolutions, have charged WHO with supporting a wide range of activities. Among the areas identified for action are: maturity before childbearing and promotion of responsible parenthood; maternal health and safe motherhood; and women, children and AIDS.

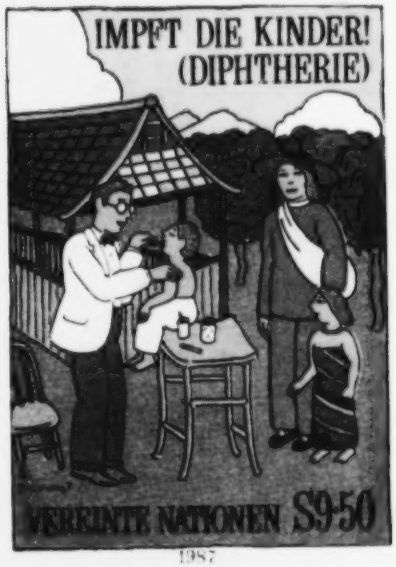
The Director of the Division of Family Health is WHO's focal point for WHD, supported by a Steering Committee on Women, Health and Development. The Committee was established to help plan WHD activities as an integral part of various WHO programmes and to coordinate support to WHO regions and Member States. All activities are undertaken in collaboration with Member States and other UN agencies, particularly with those whose activities have a bearing on women, health and development such as UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and UNDP.

Women and "Health for All"

Considerable progress has been made during the last decade in WHD in the context of the "Health for All" strategy and promotion of the health provisions of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS). Among the most positive outcomes are: the promotion, collection and dissemination of gender specific health data; promotion of women's perspectives, participation and leadership in health and development; and promotion of women's role in health and health-related matters from family to decision-making levels.

Monitoring of global indicators covers maternal mortality as well as access to maternity care and family planning. A net-

work of multisectoral teams consisting of representatives of women's organizations, government focal points for women in development and managers of national maternal and child health/family planning (MCH/FP) programmes has been established in 32 countries covering six WHO regions. The teams in ten of these countries have initiated action research on promoting women's leadership and participation in MCH/FP. The funding needed to launch these activities was provided by UNFPA.



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The Challenge: Insufficient Progress and New Problems

Despite all efforts, the health status of women in the developing countries remains poor. A second evaluation of the Health for All strategy indicated that although there has been some progress in the provision of health care, the situation in many countries is precarious and in some cases worsening. For example, maternal mortality persists at an alarmingly high rate, a reflection of social inequity and inadequate access to obstetric care and family planning services. Women remain disadvantaged in many sectors. Increasingly, poverty is becoming a female phenomenon and its feminization continues even in industralized countries. Moreover, ***many poor women are homeless*** and deliver their first children during adolescence, before reaching physical and emotional maturity. These mothers generally live in difficult health conditions and present significant emotional and medical problems. In recent years, maternal drug abuse and AIDS have also been reported.

Due to a variety of cultural, socio-economic and care factors, the mortality rate of the female child is higher than than of the male child in a number of countries. More than 50% of infant deaths in developing countries occur withing the first month after birth, mostly due to preventable health problems during pregnancy and mismanaged deliveries. 60% of pregnant women in Asia and Africa suffer from nutritional anaemia which has health consequences for both mother and fetus. The developing countries account for 99% of the world's maternal mortality: the risk for a woman in Africa dying in child-birth is 1 in 23, compared to 1 in 2,000 in developed countries.

The Life-Span Approach and Plans for the Future

In the area of women's health, WHO focuses both on their overall health needs as well as specific requirements at various ages, i.e. girlhood, adolescence, reproductive years, midlife and old age. The focus for women in their reproductive years, for instance, includes reproductive health and family planning, maternal health and safe motherhood, sexually transmitted diseases and emphasis on appropriate use of technologies in pregnancy, childbirth and family planning. Other priority areas include gender-specific indicators such as differentials in health and diseases; access to and utilization of health services including cultural and psychosocial factors; and the parti-

cipation of women and women's organizations in health care and disease prevention and control programmes. In this context, special attention is paid to women's perspectives both as providers and consumers of health care.

Future plans include a shift from specific women's activities to bringing WHD into the mainstream of WHO and national programmes. This will include focusing on women as agents of change in partnership with men; formation of new alliances between sectors; reorientation of priorities and allocation of further resources for meeting both existing and emerging needs of women. Investment in the health and socio-economic status of women is crucial, both in women's own right and because of their vital importance to the health and well-being of future generations and society as a whole. Enhancing the status of women, equipping them with basic knowledge and skills and access to services, and bringing them into the mainstream of development as full partners can have a profound impact on all people and is imperative for achieving the development goals of humanity in the 1990s and beyond. ■

FAO and Women in Development

A specific mandate for action on women in agriculture and rural development was first recognized in FAO's 1979 Declaration of Principles and Programme of Action at the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. That document stated that women should participate in rural development on an equal basis with men and share fully in the improvement of living conditions in rural areas. In keeping with FAO's overall mandate, the major thrust of its activities is directed at supporting women in their role, as agricultural producers. With this in mind, in November 1989, the FAO Conference developed and unanimously approved a Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development. It is now the primary document governing WID activities for the period up to 1995.

The principal unit addressing women's issues is FAO's Women in Agricultural Production and Rural Development Services. One of its most important responsibilities is to support the Inter-Divisional Working Group on Women in Development, established to encourage all FAO departments and divisions to integrate women's concerns into their mainstream activities.

Accomplishments and Lessons

Considerable social progress took place in the developing world during the 1980s. Yet disparities -- often severe -- persisted. Agricultural extension systems often did not serve smallholders and women farmers as well as large cultivators and male farmers. Women represented only a small proportion of agricultural extension field staff, ranging from 7% in Africa to 14.5% in Asia. An FAO study on agricultural extension and farm women in the 1990s showed that rural women still face serious constraints in gaining access to extension services. Constraints include a lack of relevant research and extension packages, lack of trained field staff to work with rural women, limited access to productive resources and the attitudes of many key officials.

The design of agrarian reforms

often failed to take women's special needs into account. Households were usually considered the relevant target unit, with little attention paid to the distribution of land rights within the household. As a consequence the relative position of women sometimes suffered. For instance, the common practice of granting land title to male heads of household diminished women's control over land usage and transfers and accentuated intra-household gender disparities.

Recognition of the important roles played by women in household and own-account agricultural production and processing and in farm and non-farm wage labour has increased in the past decade. Since women are more likely than men to be engaged in casual labour contracts rather than permanent ones, generally earning only 30% to 40% of men's wages, there was clearly a need for further measures to reduce the bias against women.

Agricultural growth played a crucial role in stimulating non-farm activities during the 1980s. Policies designed to raise farm productivity also promoted non-farm activities. In view of the concentration of women in some of these expanding non-farm activities -- such as food processing and preparation, tailoring and trading -- special promotional measures recognizing the key role of women in these areas are called for.

FAO field experience has shown that many attempts to enhance women's income-earning capacity had failed to consider constraints against them and therefore had low returns and sustainability. Projects thus should first aim at reducing women's time spent in unpaid work in order to permit them to engage in paid work which generates sufficient employment and income. Projects should attempt to either diversify production or identify new markets. Currently, women tend to predominate in post-harvest processing activities and handicrafts production of basic wage goods where constraints on access to land, credit and markets are fewer, these activities are therefore highly competitive and cannot generate much additional income.

One major factor in the access of the poor to productivity-increasing inputs was their restricted access to credit at reasonable interest rates. Governments sometimes attempt to provide low interest loans to disadvantaged groups through credit subsidy and loan guarantee schemes, often with mixed results, or alternatively, to minimize default risks for the landless -- especially women -- through such mechanisms as relying on group lending and accepting collateral in the form of personal reputation or of non-land assets such as jewellery.

The effectiveness of grass roots organizations (cooperatives, producers' associations, women's groups, for example) can be enhanced by promoting self-reliant, member-controlled people's organizations and strengthening the participation of the rural population -- including women -- in decision-making processes. Since women generally represent a very small proportion of the membership of formal rural organizations, special attention is needed to promote their participation, particularly in decision-making processes, and to support the development activities of women's groups.

Plans for the Future

FAO's Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development presents a broad charter for increasing the overall effectiveness of agricultural development. It is a practical plan to increase agricultural production, improve the health and nutrition of rural families and foster national growth by improving women's access to new technologies in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. While projects for women are

important, the Plan's focus is on women and men working together in mainstream projects where most technical assistance is directed.

The Plan recognizes that women already make a crucial contribution to agricultural production. It is dedicated to enhancing their participation through projects that systematically bring women into the mainstream of development activities and national life. Within this framework, future activities will give greater recognition to women's special needs for income-producing activities and control of income, educational and training opportunities and technologies and other means to ease the burdens and increase the productivity of women's work. Because not all actions can be carried out simultaneously, the priorities have been identified as follows: 1) FAO staff training in WID; 2) policy advice to member governments; 3) project development and monitoring; 4) reorientation of home economic and agricultural curricula; 5) preparation and promotion of WID guidelines and manuals; 6) data collection, research studies, communication and public information; 7) population education and WID and 8) sustainability, natural resource management and environment.■

IFAD: *Focus on Poor Rural Women*

Rural women, who constitute the largest, most vulnerable segment of the rural poor, have been largely bypassed by development programmes. In fact, nearly 60% of the rural poor in the developing countries are women, over 550 million in all.

The economic potential of these women always at the forefront of concern for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), is now the focus of its policy paper on "IFAD's Strategies for the Economic Advancement of Poor Rural Women". It was formally adopted at the January 1992 Governing Council at the end of a year-long consultative process involving over 100 governments, 60 non-governmental organizations women in development experts and United Nations colleagues. A Women's Summit, initiated by six First Ladies, endorsed the principle that rural women are a valuable asset and resource with great potential and a vast reservoir of knowledge and experience in rural economies, food production and ecosystems. The global shift toward democracy and increased emphasis on people's participation in the development process will make it possible for rural women to represent a potent political force that can strenghthen and consolidate international efforts in all its forms. The Geneva Declaration for Rural Women adopted at the Summit acknowledges these factor and recommends specific actions to be taken. Operational guidelines for introducing gender strategies in IFAD project designs have now been prepared accordingly.

The IFAD Record

IFAD has actively involved the rural poor in their own development. This means listening to their needs, building on their knowledge and rekindling traditional livelihoods and land management practices. Increasingly, the Fund's efforts have been directed toward women, with credit a key element. Between 1978 and 1984, 27% of IFAD projects with credit components served women; since then, the figure has risen to 86%.

Several IFAD-financed projects have women as the primary beneficiaries; two, in India and Nepal, are exclusively for women.

Small loans are enough to start a woman economic enterprise out of poverty. Experience has proved that poor rural women are almost always credit-worthy. The repayment rate for women borrowers in one project in Nepal was 95%, a rate 20% higher than farm credit repayment in many industrialized nations. Women use these loans for a wide range of purposes, for buying seeds, fertilizers, tools, for investing in small livestock, for materials for food processing or setting up trading or community services. In all instances the goal is to grow more food or earn more income.

In addition to credit, extension services and technological information are keys to advancement for poor rural women. This often involves recruiting and training female extension staff -- something a number of IFAD projects have accomplished. Literacy programmes, training in nutrition and child care, and the formation of self-help groups all provide women with vital support. IFAD's purpose is to get aid to the people that other agencies often miss -- to fill the gap that is one of the most critical in the world today. The Fund has proved that no people are too poor, too isolated or too marginalized to be within the reach of effective projects.

Remaining Challenges

National laws and institutional procedures must ensure that rural women have access to basic productive resources and agricultural inputs. It is vital that extension services become more sensitive to women's roles and needs and that the number of female extension workers be increased. Women's efforts to earn income through small on and off-farm enterprises must be bolstered by policies and projects that expand the opportunities for such activities and provide appropriate guidance, training and resources.

Through a process of regional and international consultations, IFAD has highlighted several possible new project areas. Among them are problems related to rural to urban migration, specifically with regard to young rural women under contract wages. This is a particularly serious situation in countries where large numbers of young women and girls live in tenuous semi-urban areas. Their return to rural areas could conceivably be promoted by incentives favorable enough to compete with their contract wages.

IFAD will also intensify its relationship with NGOs and the private sector in order to deploy their efforts more effectively within the framework of government policies and procedures. There is an urgent need to encourage private sector initiatives in rural areas to help increase on and off-farm employment, improve rural infrastructure, and expand market opportunities for ancillary activities.

Future strategies for IFAD will also involve an expanding collaboration on gender issues and strengthening its collaboration with WID mechanisms within the UN system and multilateral organizations. Particular attention will be given to harmonization of programmes at the country level in close collaboration with national institutions. ■

ILO: *Women and Work*

Action in favor of equal treatment and opportunities for men and women in the working environment is a fundamental principle of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Since its establishment in 1919, ILO has seen its main task as the struggle for respect of human rights for everyone, without discrimination of any kind. The 1944 Philadelphia Declaration, which became an integral part of ILO's Constitution, proclaims that "All human beings, regardless of race, creed or sex, have the right to search for their material well-being and spiritual development under conditions of liberty and dignity, economic security and equal opportunity." The Organization has remained firmly committed to this goal, helping member States eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in employment.

International Labour Standards

ILO's tripartite structure, unique within the UN system, has enabled it to involve representatives of governments, employers and workers in joint efforts to implement policies, strategies and practical measures to ensure real equality between the sexes. The International Labour Standards, an international code adopted by ILO, include more than 170 conventions and recommendations on a wide range of work-related issues. These standards generally apply equally to women and men, but there are provisions which apply specifically to women. They have two primary objectives: to protect working women, particularly with regard to maternity and occupational hazards which may affect their reproductive functions and to promote equality of opportunity and treatment with respect to all labour matters and particularly, to remuneration and family responsibilities.

Obstacles to Equality

Numerous difficulties persist in transforming the principles of equal rights in theory into equal rights in practice. Although there has been a dramatic increase in women's participation in the work force in recent years, the great majority of women continue to work in low-skill, low-paying jobs with little prestige, little or no job

security and poor working conditions. In urban areas in the developing countries, women are increasingly being pushed into the informal sector as opportunities in the formal employment market decrease. In rural areas women are the backbone of traditional agriculture, but their work is not fully recognized, it is often unremunerated and they have severely limited access to land, credit, training and technology. Legions of women working in the home are not accounted for in statistical records and their economic and social contributions thus remain "invisible" to planners.

From Principle to Practice

ILO has concentrated on the critical constraints to women's participation in the work force and to the improvement of the quality of their working life: increasing access to trainning and employment opportunities, improvements in working conditions and social protection and more effective organization and participation in decision-making. In short, ILO policy has evolved from an emphasis on protecting women at work toward the promotion of effective measures to eliminate the barriers to equality between the sexes. Parallel to this, programmes initially designed specifically for women are now emphasizing the inclusion of a gender dimension -- analysis differentiated by sex -- in *all* ILO activities.

For the medium term, three issues are of particular importance to ILO: support to the democratization process with emphasis on equal social and economic opportunity, the elimination of poverty through greater employment opportunities for the poorest sectors where women predominate, and establishment of social protection of the most vulnerable population groups with emphasis on working conditions, occupational health and social security.

In Partnership with INSTRAW

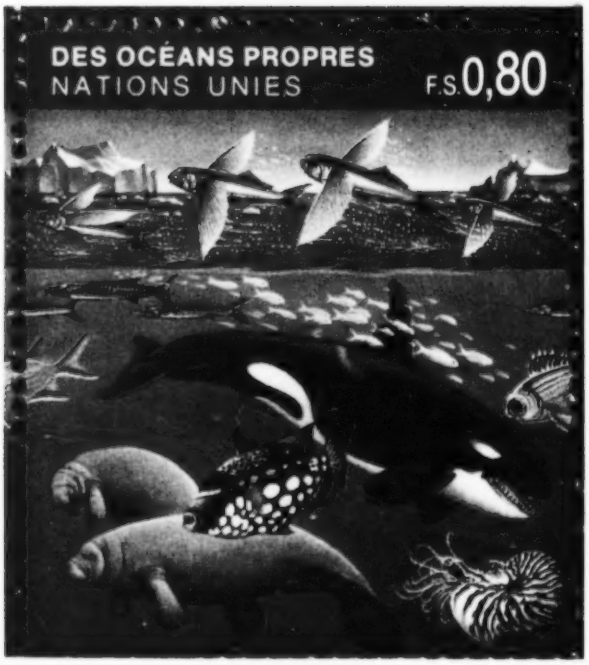
ILO has maintained a very close working relationship with INSTRAW in addressing many of these issues. In the areas of education and training, for example, ILO helped develop and produce INSTRAW's multimedia training modules for "training the trainers"

ILO has also been an active participant in INSTRAW's analysis of the problems of women in the informal sector. At a conference held in Rome in 1991 ILO was able to identify some of the more subtle challenges to be addressed, among them, built in *technological* biases in favor of male workers. The skills in greatest demand are usually not taught to women. In the garment industry, for instance, cutting is typically done by machines run by men; the stitching, a more traditional unmechanized skill, is left to women.

In the long run, meaningful and sustainable equality for men and women will depend on women's own capabilities to understand and exercise their rights. ILO gives high priority to vocational training, education and organization of women to ensure their growing and effective participation and decision-making levels. And the Organization will energetically pursue its efforts to persuade governments, employers and workers to work together to break down all remaining barriers to women's complete and unconditional equality. ■

UNEP: *Toward Action on Agenda 21*

There is an entire chapter on "Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development" in Agenda 21, the action plan adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro this year and the first part of the agreed text. Skeptics regard the women's text as marginal, of secondary importance to the more contentious issues which dominate the headlines. A more sanguine viewpoint can be credited to persistent outreach efforts by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) which since 1984 has encouraged women to assume new roles and responsibilities for environmental management.



Created as a result of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, UNEP's mandate is to serve as a catalyst, facilitator and coordinator within the UN system and among nations and publics, on behalf of environmental management. Generating activities to promote the participation of women was a natural outgrowth of these mandates.

Network in Nairobi

Headquartered in Nairobi, UNEP was well positioned to work in support of the end-Decade Women's Conference held in Nairobi in 1985. There UNEP launched an extensive four-pronged campaign: 1) to increase awareness of women's unique perspective in their traditional roles as environmental managers; 2) to promote the active participation of women in environmental forums; 3) to encourage women's networking in support of their own environmental management initiatives; and 4) to enhance women's knowledge of environmental issues to ensure their appropriate and effective participation at all levels of society.

During that period, the Executive Director established UNEP's Senior Women's Advisory Group on Sustainable Development (SWAG), consisting of 20 high level women from around the world. Since then, SWAG has been instrumental in UNEP's efforts, beginning with the Nairobi Women's Conference, in advancing key resolutions, such as those in the Nairobi

Forward-looking Strategies (NFLS) which highlighted for the first time, women's important role in protecting and managing the environment, and the fact that women are often the first victims of environmental degradation.

UNEP created an extensive mailing list of over 1,000 women leaders to keep them informed and in touch with each other. This effort has been greatly advanced in cooperation with the non-governmental international organization, WorldWIDE, World Women in the Environment. Several of UNEP's SWAG members serve as International Advisers to WorldWIDE.

Preparing for UNCED

Follow-up to the 1985 Nairobi Conference and in anticipation of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), engaged UNEP in extensive efforts which resulted in four regional conferences, held in Simbabwe, Tunisia, Thailand and Ecuador between 1987 and 1991. Their common purpose was to engage women in assessing environmental conditions in each region, to establish women's networks for future cooperation, and to review government plans for environmental action. In the course of these conferences, potential women leaders in environmental management emerged as an important factor for achieving sustainable development.

The regional conferences culminated in November 1991 in the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment: "Partners in Life". The over 500 participants included representatives of national governments, international agencies, corporations, foundations, NGOs and universities. Its objective was unique in scope, to demonstrate women's abilities and capacities as environmental managers as they related to specific global ecological issues, and opportunities, water, waste, energy, and environmentally sound technologies, products and systems. The overall theme was environmental sustainability; over 200 "success stories", chosen from more than 17,000 nominations from all parts of the world, were presented. These strongly demonstrated women's knowledge and leadership in environmental management at all levels. A sampling of the projects presented can only hint at the range: from the Philippines, management of a community waste disposal system; from Haiti, new soil conservation techniques to reclaim degraded land; from Nigeria, a reforestation project initiated by a local women's organization.

By all accounts, the Assembly was a great success, both in the substance of its presentations, debates, and in the extremely effective networking process by which it was organized. Much of its momentum carried forward to Rio, influencing the decisions of governments and reaffirmed by the Global Forum.

Looking Ahead

The blueprint laid out in Agenda 21 is clear: women's important roles are specifically recognized and, perhaps more important, women's issues are treated as cross-cutting all environmental issues; they are, in effect, mainstreamed. Urgent priority is given to averting further environmental degradation in three areas most directly affecting the lives of rural women and children: drought, desertification and deforestation. On these and other urgent issues such as management of toxic wastes, Agenda 21 underscores the need for women to be "fully involved in decision-making and the implementation of sustainable development activities."

Specific recommendations are made with regard to the UN system, notably a strengthening of the capacity of all UN institutions in meeting environment and development goals, particularly the three with special focus on women, INSTRAW, DAW, and UNIFEM. In addition, UNDP is asked to establish a women's focal point for environment in each of its resident representative offices.

The initial challenge for UNEP is clear: to use Agenda 21 as a general framework for future activities to keep women's involvement at the forefront, and to concentrate on strengthening women's environmental efforts supported by all UN system. Working through a UN ad hoc working group, with WorldWIDE and bilateral agencies, UNEP has to maintain this important momentum and affect official policies and priorities at all levels. ■

The World Bank

The Banks' Women in Development (WID) strategy involves improving opportunities for women in five areas: female education, family planning and maternal health care; agricultural extension and other services; provision of credit and support services for female entrepreneurs; and access to labour markets. The Bank's main WID activities in 1990-1991 included the following:

1. *Analytical Work:* 62% of economic and sector reports contained discussions and recommendations on WID, compared to 41% in the previous period. 72% of all country macroeconomic reports discussed WID issues, up from 50%. About 31 WID Country Assessments and Action Plans have been carried out. The impact of these strategies is already being felt in the Bank's operations as well as in Government actions.

2. *Policy and Research Work:* included sectoral guidelines on forestry, agricultural extension, and primary and secondary education, all emphasizing best operational practices. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, a major study of women's earnings and labour force participation in 9 countries was carried out. In addition, three *legal* studies on WID (Mexico, Egypt, India) were completed; another is in preparation.

3. *Operations:* 40% of all Bank operations had women targeted as special beneficiaries or included specific components that would have a positive effect on the status of women. (This compares to 30% the previous year and significantly less before that.)

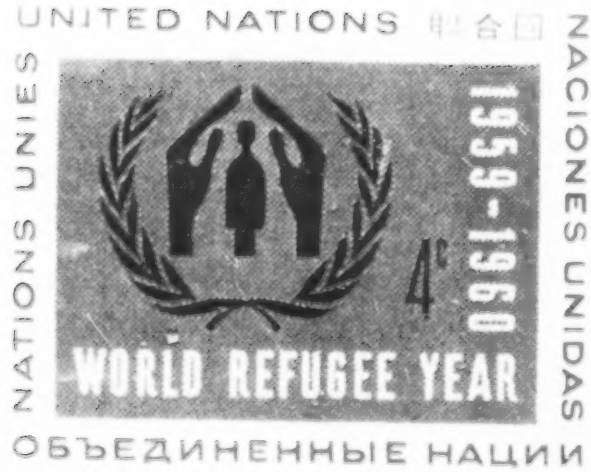
A Sampling of the Bank's WID Priorities:

- Guidelines on higher education
- Maternal health and family planning
- Overview of issues and best practices on women in agriculture
- Overview of gender aspects of finance and entrepreneurship
- Survey paper on female labour force participation
- Review paper on intra-household resource allocation and its relation to macro-policy. ■

UNHCR: *Mending Disrupted Lives*

Since 1985, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has given special attention to providing protection for refugee women. It was a response to a stark necessity: women and children account for 80% of the increasing number of refugees from persecution and armed conflict around the world. Becoming a refugee affects men and women very differently and each case is as different as the cultures and societies it represents. For women especially, their traditional roles in society have been disrupted and the refugee experience can either undermine or reinforce them.

In planning its programmes for refugees, UNHCR therefore gives high priority to ensuring that whenever possible, all refugees have the opportunity to participate in planning for their own accommodations and activities. This planning includes more than recognizing a woman's role as daughter, wife or mother, but also her economic role as producer and manager of the family's resources, and, perhaps a completely new role, as head of household and income earner.



From Isolation to the Mainstream

There is sometimes a tendency to treat refugees as passive victims, to isolate them from mainstream activities, thus further reinforcing their dependency on aid-givers and forcing them into unaccustomed social or economic roles. At first, usually inadvertently, refugee workers sometimes either overlooked women in general or marginalized them still further by segregating them in small "women's projects." The concept of mainstreaming refugee women evolved from a better understanding of their special, very different needs. It became clear that to overcome their disorientation and sense of loss, women should be consulted about the very basics of their lives: the type of shelter they needed, their traditional diets and ways of preparing food, and how they allocated and distributed food.

It was from that point that UNHCR's policies and operational objectives became defined: to identify the constraints to

women's participation in the procedures related to delivery of services to them, to respond to women's own initiatives to improve their situations, to provide appropriate technologies to save their time and energies, and finally, to collect gender-specific baseline statistics to eliminate unintentional discrimination in any of UNHCR's activities.

Emphasis on Gender Training

UNHCR's overall policy guidelines are put into effect largely through special training courses for its own staff and that of its operational partners in other UN agencies, governments, and NGOs. Gender-sensitivity has become the key: the UNHCR manual of programme and Project Management has been revised to include a ***Gender Analytic Framework***; more female field staff is being recruited to work with women refugees; and screening of applicants for refugee status now includes components specific to females. Perhaps most important, because UNHCR is dependent for co-financing for its operations, UNHCR has identified a wide variety of projects which integrates refugee women's issues into overall aid and development programmes rather than into smaller, special women's activities. For example, a regional nutritionist has been assigned in southern Africa to monitor women and children and focus on early identification of malnutrition and prevention among refugee women. In Malawi, refugee women are being trained in non-traditional skills such as carpentry and welding. Linkages are also being established between refugees and women in mainstream development networks to undertake gender training for field workers.

Future Directions

Sustaining the progress made so far may be difficult. UNHCR has only one staff member whose assignment is strictly limited to women's issues, and continued funding for that post is uncertain.

There are attitudinal gaps between theory and practice as well. Emphasis on women is comparatively new to refugee operations, and there is sometimes a reluctance to change familiar and trusted methods. For example, there has been relatively little progress made in increasing the participation of refugees, particularly women refugees, in the first stages of an emergency situation. Immediate community mobilization is essential to identify such problems as inappropriate food, inability to prepare it, or barriers to use of health and sanitation services. In the absence of timely remedial action, these difficulties tend to fester and become still more severe. Unfortunately, comunity outreach is still viewed by many refugee workers as social services which should be introduced during the later care and maintenance stage. Refugee women are thus effectively denied any opportunity to plan and participate in the very basics of their own lives.

With this in mind, gender training is being expanded and integrated into special two-day courses, called ***People-Oriented Planning***. Priority is now being given to sustained training for UNHCR staff as well as for host country personnel and for their operational partners, NGOs. Five regional training sessions, three in Africa and two in El Salvador and an emergency preparedness workshop in Geneva have already been held; further sessions in Thailand and Geneva are scheduled for later this year.

Plans for the future, depending on the availability of funds, call for expanding this training, now largely limited to trainers, to all field workers,

and, through distribution of relevant materials, to NGOs for further training of their own staffs. In addition, UNHCR hopes to establish more extensive formal arrangements with UNIFEM to reinforce present joint activities and provide a more comprehensive framework for the future.

Finally, staff training must be reinforced with accountability through careful review and appraisal of projects as well as staff. Special officers for women and children are being posted in key regions to help field staff monitor and report on progress and to ensure that both ongoing and new programmes are responsive to UNHCR policy guidelines. It is expected that these officers will be able to identify and resolve any barriers to progress. ■

IAEA: *High-Tech Health Care for Women*

Although the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are not specifically directed toward women, certain programmes undertaken by the Division of Life Sciences are. IAEA's Technical Assistance Programme and its Research Contracts Programme (CRP) -- and aproximately 11% of research contracts awarded are headed by women -- provide training and equipment in areas directly concerned with women's health, primarily in cancer detection and therapy as well as nutrition.

For example, cancer of the cervix and uterus are the most common female malignancies in many of the developing countries. For instance, cervical cancer constitutes about 40% of all cancers in Guatemala, according to an expert report. Early detection and proper radiotherapy treatment often provide better clinical results, not to mention less pain and lower morbidity, when compared with chemotherapy or other forms of treatment.

A Japanese-funded CRP on computer-assisted planning and dosimetry for radiotherapy for cervical cancer in Asia and the Pacific region is now under way. The objective is the identification of optimum treatments and improved accuracy in radiotherapy planning. The experience gained here will be recommended to other countries, particularly in Africa, where cancer of the cervix still constitutes a major cause of death among the female population. Another example is a multi-year IAEA/WHO project, a training and demonstration

course carried out in Egypt for radiation therapy for cancer of the uterus. It has now become a centre for post-graduate studies in radiotherapy and radiophysics.

In the area of nutrition, the IAEA, in cooperation with the International Dietary Energy Consultation Group and 40 institutes in 20 countries, has published procedures for the safe detection (using stable isotopes) of serious deficiencies such as those often affecting pregnant women in developing countries. Cameroon is one of the countries most severely affected by iron-deficiency anemia and iodine deficiency disorders seriously affecting pregnant and lactating women. IAEA helps provide training, equipment and expert services to help improve the national diet. IAEA is also training doctors and technicians in radiotherapy techniques for treatment of cervical cancer.

This is just one example of IAEA's technical assistance programmes to develop human resources and technical infrastructure for the treatment of health disorders of major concern to women. In 1992 and 1993, the Agency will continue to give priority to women wherever possible in all aspects of its programmes.■

UNRWA: *Activities on Behalf of Women*

UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) provides education, health, relief and social services and other assistance to registered Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and the occupied territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Women, who make up approximately 49% of the more than two and a half million refugees, benefit substantially from the Agency's education and health programmes. Girls are represented in UNRWA's elementary and preparatory schools in

the same proportion as their numbers in the 6 to 14 age group in the refugee population. The Agency's health programme places a strong emphasis on mother and child health care.

Programmes aimed specifically at women, however, come under the auspices of the Department of Relief and Social Services. By 31 December 1991, 62 women's programme centres were operating throughout UNRWA's area of operations. These are multi-purpose centres which are used, *inter alia*, for health, education, literacy classes and learning in early childhood development and as places where women can be freely consulted on community needs and involved in initiatives to improve community facilities.

Additional women's centres are scheduled to be established in 1992 and 1993. UNRWA is also taking steps to assist the many palestine refugee women who carry heavy additional responsibilities as heads of households. A triple objective has been identified by the Agency: to enable more women to acquire the skills and opportunities to earn a living; to help them cope better with family and social problems; and to facilitate their role in the development of their community. The focal points in this endeavour will be the women's programme centres.■

UNIDO: *New Skills for New Industries*

Women are increasingly contributing to the process of industrialization in developing countries. They are found in the small-scalle/informal production sector where their contribution is largely unrecorded but indispensable to supplying rural and urban community needs, and, in the modern industrial sector where the overwhelming majority of women work in a limited number of low skill and poorly rewarded jobs. Since the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women, the policy-making bodies of UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) have been urging developing countries to create conditions that would bring about "the full integration of women in social and economic activities and, in particular, in the industrialization process, on the basis of equal rights".

The Women's Programme

In 1986, UNIDO established the Unit for the Integration of Women in Industrial Development with responsibility for developing, promoting, co-ordinating and monitoring activities within UNIDO that affect women at all levels and sectors of industry.

Today, the integration of women into industrial development is a priority, designed to ensure that women are equal participants and equal beneficiaries of all UNIDO projects. The objective is to clearly identify individual measures and activities to promote the enhancement of women's participation in industry. Some measures include gender sensitization courses for managerial and supervisory staff, project designers, implementers and evaluators; requirement for assignment of women-in-development (WID) experts to program

ming missions, project formulation missions and evaluation missions; regional expert group meetings with both field staff and government officials on women's integration (one each in Africa, Asia and Latin America).

Training for Tomorrow

Training opportunities for women in industry, particularly in areas of production and entrepreneurship remain insufficient and largely limited to traditional occupations in most of the developing countries. The introduction of new technologies and therefore new skill requirements can have severe impacts on women who already lag behind in education, training and levels of skill.

New technologies which eliminate requirements of physical strength in many jobs through computerized production systems are now opening a whole range of new employment possibilities. But to take advantage of these opportunities, women will need to be more highly trained and skilled than ever before. The policy making bodies of the UN have therefore given UNIDO a strong mandate to integrate women into all its activities in training, design, implementation and evaluation.

The Statistical Factor

The issue of women in industry will increasingly be addressed in industrial studies and research activities, in particular through a stronger focus on human resource development. Only 18 out of 78 countries working with UNIDO have provided gender-specific employment statistics for the period 1981-1986. The adaptation of national statistics is a long-term process, dependant on the efforts of national governments. To better monitor this situation, a Reference File on the Consideration of Women in Project Design, Management and Evaluation was developed by UNIDO which contains a set of guidelines on how to consider women at different steps of the project cycle, focusing on small - to medium-scale industry, and is supplemented by a country-specific Data Base on Women in Industry.

Even without accurate gender-dissagregated statistics, it is evident that the full integration of women in industry will be advantageous to both women and the countries themselves. The human resource base of developing nations is a valuable asset for industrialization. Women constitute a significant segment of the population whose potential so far has not been sufficiently utilized. Improved industrial skills among women workers and growing female entrepreneurship in industry will be a major factor contributing to overall growth. The interdependence between the improvement of women's position in the economy, on the one hand, and the basic objectives of development policy on the other is such that providing women with the opportunity to increase and improve their contribution to economic development is an important means of achieving the fulfilment of basic development goals.

One thing is clear: it is imperative that the international community live up to its responsibilities by ensuring that in preparation for the 1995 World Conference, women are considered at all levels of industrial and social development so that they have the same chance as men for an enhanced quality of life that they and their children deserve.■

UNRISD: *Research Institute for Social Development*

The UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) is an autonomous research organization which focuses on the most pressing social problems of development. Although its projects are not usually geared specifically toward women, there is currently one now being conducted on Women, Environment and Population. It compares the impact of various kinds of environmental degradation on family livelihood and women's life chances in three countries, Kenya, Malaysia and Mexico.

The research objective is to understand the highly complex relationships between women's livelihood, population dynamics and environmental change. It is exploring various mechanisms in the population-environment relation, in particular, how environmental degradation affects local population-related variables and how populations manage environmental resources once degradation has set in.

For example, in Kenya, growing population pressures, privatization of land, and the clearing of both land and forests have led to a scarcity of woodfuel. Traditionally collected free by women and children, woodfuel has become a tradable commodity which is monopolized by men, who have the mobility to travel to far off forests. One result is that women are forced to resort to fuel-saving meals which may be less nutritious than longer cooking traditional dishes.

Preliminary recommendation from the studies stress that women's entitlement and access to land, opportunities, positions, authority and forms of decision-making must be respected and not weakened in the process of change and in the implementation of development programmes. ■

WORK INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION *WIPO*

- Since 1979 WIPO has awarded 264 gold medals in a special awards programme for inventors. More than 40 have been given to women.
- In 1991, 159 women out of 506, or 32%, took part in WIPO training programmes. This represents an increase of 2% over the year before.
- In the same year, 38 out of 267 experts and lecturers took part, or 14%, up from 11% the year before.

UNCTAD and the Least Developed Countries

The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Paris in 1990, is a comprehensive statement of strategy and policies aiming to arrest the further deterioration in the socio-economic situation in these countries; to reactivate and accelerate their growth and development, and to set them on the path of sustained growth and development.
The development actions outlined in the Programme of Action are underwritten by the principles of shared responsibility and a strengthened partnership between the Least developed countries (LDCs) and their development partners. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), where consideration of the special problems of the LDCs first started, has been designated by the UN General Assembly as the focal point for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action and its follow-up at the global level and to provide support at the national and regional levels.

One of the most notable aspects of the Programme of Action is that it underscores the need for development to be human-centred and broadly based, enabling all actors in the society, especially women, to participate fully and freely in the development process. In this perspective, it develops a substantive section entitled "Full participation of women in the development process", setting out the general orientation of national policies that should be undertaken by the LDCs in this regard and identifying specific measures to develop and mobilize women as both agents and beneficiaries of the development process. The Programme of Action also identifies monitoring in particular the involvement of women as one of the five main elements of the follow-up of its implementation at the global level. As part of its task concerning follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action, the UNCTAD secretariat has continued to deal with the issues relating to women in the LDCs. Under the special issues part of the 1991 issue of its Least Developed Countries Report, which is the basis of intergovernmental review of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action, a full section has been devoted to the participation of women in development, containing an analysis of the status of women in LDCs and the ways and means to enhance their participation in the process of development in these countries.■

WIDER:
THE WORLD INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS RESEARCH

Established by the United Nations University (UNU) in Helsinki in 1985, WIDER is responsible for UNU's work in Women in Development (WID). A resident researcher and coordinator, who heads WIDER's WIDprogramme, also represents the UN University at UN and othe rmeetings and conferences.

TWO ONGOING RESEARCH PROJECTS ARE:

- Mahgreb Women Horizon 2000
- Women's Organization in Casual Trade

OTHER PROJECTS HAVE INCLUDED:

- National Development, Identity, Politics and Concepts of Feminism
- Women and Development in the Muslim World

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INSTRAW **news** is to report on the work of the Institute and, in doing this, to record research trends, disseminate training materials, and promote networking on women in development issues at a global level.

The editorial policy of INSTRAW is to select events, news and items linked with its programmes and related activities.

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